

Sarah T aylor

A
Little TREATISE
Of being
BORN AGAIN:

Without which
No MAN can be SAVED.
Being the SUBSTANCE of Four
SERMONS preach'd at BLACK-
FRYARS; With some Enlarge-
ments, since added.

By S. WRIGHT.

*Illud verè saculo gratulor, repertos homines qui neutiquam
in Controversiis subtilibus tantum ponunt, quantum in verà
Vita emendatione & quotid'ano ad Sanctitatem profectū.
Utinam & mea Scripta aliquid ad hoc studium in Animis
Hominum excitandum inflammandumque conferre possint:
Tunc enim non frustra me vixisse hactenus existimem.*

Grotij ad Crellium Ep.

THE SECOND EDITION, Corrected.

L O N D O N :

Printed for EMANUEL MATTHEWS, at the Bible in
Pater-Noster-Row; and JOHN CLARK, at the Bible
and Crown in Cheapside, near the Poultry, 1719.

THE TREATISE

BOOK IV

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A LETTER to the AUTHOR;
Which is here inserted, as
the *Reason of his publishing*
the following Sheets.

REVEREND SIR!

YOUR—— Discourses upon the
weighty Subject of Regenera-
tion, have so affected us, that
we have cause to *Praise* GOD, who
hath bless'd us with the opportunity of
hearing them: And we hope a great
many more have reason to do the same.
We could wish they might be more pub-
lick;—— and we hope you will suffer
them to go abroad into the World, for
the edifying the Church of CHRIST;
and to render the *Filthy, who will be Fil-
thy still*, so much the more inexcusable.

Had not we, thro' Grace, experien-
ced something of the *new Birth*, we

should not have enter'd within your *Meeting-House*, being of the *Establish'd Church*: But this has remov'd our Prejudices; and with *St. Peter*, of a *Truth we perceive*, that *GOD is no respecter of Persons*, nor differing Opinions as merely touching Church Government; but in every Place, *He that worketh Righteousness is accepted with him*.

We hope you will excuse our great Freedom; we protest before GOD, we have no Sinister End: The Good of our *Relatives and Neighbours* is near our Hearts; and because we humbly conceive those ——— *SERMONS* will conduce much thereto, we cannot but request of you, what we have so earnestly desired among *our selves*, the Publication of them. And shall continue to pray for the increase of GOD on your future Labours, as well as return Thanks for former Benefits. And remain

Yours,

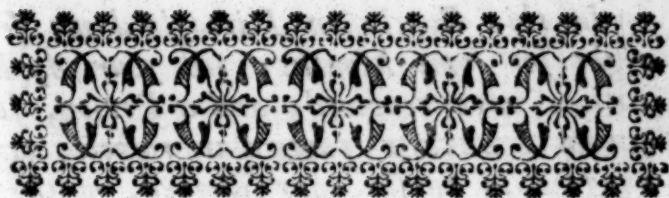
J. J.

R. W.

E. E.

M. M.

THE



THE
Author's ANSWER:

Which may serve instead of a

P R E F A C E.

GENTLEMEN!

I Receiv'd your Letter with great Thankfulness to GOD, that had made the SERMONS you speak of, so serviceable to you: But considering how many useful Treatises of this Nature, are extant already, I thought your Request, to Print on this Subject might very well be deny'd. And when the manner and warmth of delivering those SERMONS should be a little forgot, I was ready to conclude — you might alter your Sentiments of them; or at least, forbear farther to insist on their being sent to the Press.

In this Conclusion I imagin'd my self right for some Months; till your Applications were renewed; and a Person, for whom I have a particular respect, was engaged to pursue your Request, with a Resolution to take no Denial. He has indeed said so much, to assure me of your sincerity and hearty Concern in this matter, that I began to think it my Duty to comply with you: And where I apprehend any thing a Duty, I shall set that against all Objections, and all other Considerations in the World.

This Liberty however I have taken in complying with you; That I have chosen to give you those Discourses in a different Form to what you might expect; Tho' I hope in a way that may answer your End, as fully, as if I had publish'd them in the Form of SERMONS. If you look upon every Chapter as a SERMON, and read it at once, you will find very little difference from what it would have been, had the whole been printed as it was preach'd. That I did not say one thing, and now send you another, your Friend, that has taken the pains of Transcribing a great part himself, will witness for me: And you your selves, upon reading, will, I doubt

doubt not, call to mind the most of what you here meet with.

The first SERMON you will find altered as to the Method, in some few things; but you will easily know it again, when, every considerable Thought shall occur to you, in the same words that were used before. In the whole you will find some Additions; but, especially, in the Third and Fourth Chapters. That Directory for the Devotion of a Soul first turning towards GOD, p. 93, 94, 95; And the Form of a Covenant Dedication to GOD, p. 97, &c; I thought highly proper to insert in this Publication, tho' not deliver'd in your hearing. And I found some things necessary to be added, that I might render the Evidences of the new Birth more useful, and less liable to Mistakes. Some Enlargements you will also find in the closing Addresses to several sorts of Persons: But I am persuaded you will not think, upon a serious perusal, that I could have omitted any thing I have here added.

Whether this Treatise may be thought Wise, or Weak, by the generality of those that look into it, is what I shall not once enquire after: If it may prove a means

of turning any from the Evil of their ways, I shall account that the most grateful and desirable intelligence concerning it. For I think, I am not mistaken in declaring, — That I had rather see one Person smite upon his Breast, and become a true Penitent, — than see a Thousand clapping their hands, whilst they receive no real Benefit from what they hear or read.

If the following Pages may answer such an End as this, I shall have reason to be thankful to you, for putting me upon a piece of Work, that I confess I had no mind to have gone about, at this time. We live in an Age that is set against every thing of this nature; and especially, if it comes from the Hand of a Dissenter. For which reason you will not wonder that I have shewn such a Backwardness to comply with your Request. A Book of Devotion that is publish'd in the Style, and way of a Papist, shall be thought much more worthy of Regard, than one that is publish'd by a Dissenting Protestant. Or otherwise, there are Treatises I could mention, that would never have gain'd so many Impressions as they have.

I do

I do not mention this with any other view, but that, of Excusing my self for so long refusing to Print upon this Subject. 'Till Men are more inclined to Read and Consider Things, our Time and Pains in Printing must turn to very little Account.

However I would hope, you will promote the reading of this little Book in all the Families where you have any influence; Especially on the Lord's Day Evenings, when Those are sometimes called together, who on other Days live in the neglect of Reading, and every religious Duty. A Chapter then read at a time, will go thro' this Treatise in a Month. And by this means, some Persons may be engaged to hear, what they would not be persuaded, otherwise to look into.

*I was going, after all, to Apologize for my self, in publishing a Treatise from one Set of SERMONS, which might have been much better done, by taking in some things deliver'd in other SERMONS on the like Subjects: But I was immediately check'd by considering, — That 'tis the Blessing of GOD alone to which all Success is owing, even in the Best Attempts of this nature;
And*

(x)

And therefore since it hath pleased him to own, the following Discourses already, in such a manner as to You; I shall, without any more words, joyn with you, in hoping they may be blest to the Good of others. What Almighty GOD sees fit to set his Seal upon, I shall never affect to make Apologies for.

To Him, therefore, I humbly commit this Little Treatise; and to your Service I devote it in a particular manner, as a Testimony of my being

Your

*Berry Court,
Apr. 2. 1715.*

Respectful Friend,
and Servant,

S. WRIGHT.

ADVER-



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE former *Impression* of this *Treatise*, happily prov'd an Occasion, of my becoming acquainted with a GENTLEMAN, to whose Charitable Disposition and Design, this *Second Impression* is owing.

That LETTER, from *some* of the *National Church*, which engag'd me to print on this Subject, has also induc'd several others of the same *Establishment*, to read what they found thus brought into the World.

And I am allow'd to tell those, who may farther look into this *Treatise*, —
“ That it is a GENTLEMAN of the
“ ESTABLISH'D CHURCH, who has order'd this Edition to be printed, at
“ his own Charge: And to be given,
“ gratis, to all such as will seriously peruse it.”

I would humbly hope, that the *Administration of this Service*, (as well as of other *Charities*, with the disposal of which I have been entrusted, by the same Person,) will be abundant by many *Thanksgivings*

vings to GOD. And so, will occasion many *acceptable Prayers*, which shall reach the *UNKNOWN Benefactor* in a Return, both of Spiritual and Temporal Blessings, in *this Life*.

And, at last, may He *find Mercy* for his *own Soul*, who has many ways express'd *his Mercy and Compassion* for the Souls of others.

If the Salvation of Any be hereby promoted, it will be a sufficient Reward, to meet such in *Heaven*, tho' they should not be personally known here on *Earth*.

I have, together with *this Book*, considerable Numbers of BIBLES to dispose of, to those who may have Opportunities of doing good, by assisting in the Charitable Distribution of them. Such as are Strangers to the *Author*, may apply to the *Publisher*, of this *Treatise*.

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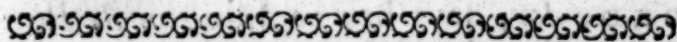
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THE



THE
GREAT DOCTRINE
OF BEING
BORN AGAIN.



J O H N iii. 3.

Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.

INTRODUCTION.



THE Conference betwixt our SAVIOUR and *Nicodemus*, out of which these words are taken, has always been thought a very considerable, and by some, a very dark and mysterious Part of Sacred Writ. Those of *Nicodemus's* Temper and Sentiments, have been

B ready,

ready, in every Age, to fall in with his Conduct, and his way of Arguing: Whilst others, that have been more under the Influence and Teaching of a Divine Spirit, have seen the Excellency and Importance of our SAVIOUR'S *Doctrine*.

The *Time*, in which this Ruler came to our LORD, was a very apt representation of his *State*. He came in the *Night*, and he appears to have been sadly in the *Dark* as to what concerns the *Gospel* Dispensation, and his Salvation by it. He had been very much affected, it seems, with the *mighty Works* of our BLESSED LORD; for, says he, *no Man can do the Miracles that thou dost, except God be with him*: But his Preaching and his words were very differently receiv'd: They were thought to be so far from being *Heavenly* and *Divine*, that they were not reconcilable to *common Sense*: *How can these things be?*

I am afraid this is too much the Case of many in our own Times: Who, while they acknowledge that JESUS CHRIST is worthy to be own'd in the brightest Day, and before all the World, yet content themselves with some obscure and partial Regards to him. How many are there, who profess to venerate him as a *Teacher sent from God*, that yet in this
grand

grand and leading Point, the *being born again*, are perfect Strangers to him? yea, what is worse, unwilling to be instructed by him? They are either cavilling against, or explaining away, the proper and spiritual Meaning of this Doctrine.

Some also there are that have follow'd this Metaphor of the *new Birth*, with others of the like nature, so far, as to render it wholly mystical and unintelligible; making no just Observations upon the more plain and express Texts of Scripture, where, without Metaphors, the nature of Regeneration is set in a clearer Light.

Such mistaken ways of treating this Subject I shall endeavour to avoid. And since our SAVIOUR has summon'd our Attention to what he here says, by prefixing a double Asseveration, to attest the Truth of it,—*Verily verily I say unto thee, &c.* I hope I need not multiply words to engage a serious Application of your Minds, to study, and make a right Use of what shall now be laid before you.

CHAP. I.

Wherein this Doctrine of being Born again, is carefully laid down.

WHEN we read so peremptory a Determination, that *none* shall see, or enter into, the Kingdom of God, but such as are *Born again*; it is reasonable to expect, every Soul that has any hope or desire of being saved, should be put upon the most solicitous Enquiries after the meaning and import of this Expression. And therefore I shall set myself to give such an Account of it, as that every one, who reads the following Treatise seriously, may both be helped to understand, and experience, *this second Birth*. In doing this, I would aim at

FIRST, Informing the Mind,

THEN, Awak'ning and Convincing the Conscience.

AFTER THAT, Directing the Practice.

AND FINALLY Settling and Composing the Spirit; by stating the Evidences of this mighty Change.

In *this Chapter* I shall endeavour to *inform the Mind* of the attentive Reader, by giving him as clear and satisfying Thoughts as I can, of the *nature of this Birth*.
It

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It was something of which *Nicodemus*, even as a *Jew*, and a *Ruler* in *Israel*, might be suppos'd to have a previous Knowledge; or at least to have been sufficiently prepar'd for the reception of it: For otherwise our SAVIOUR would not, in such a manner as we find he does, have reprov'd his Ignorance and Slowness of Apprehension; *Art thou a Master of Israel, and knowest not these things?*

The Writings of *Moses* might inform him, — that when Man first came out of the Hands of his Maker, he had a Soul breathed into him, by which he was rendered wiser and more excellent than the Beasts of the Earth; and from hence *Nicodemus* might have concluded — that the same Almighty Power could, by a farther Inspiration and Influence, at pleasure, raise Man to a higher and nobler State and Condition than that in which he now found himself, and the rest of Mankind.

The writings of *David*, and the *Prophets*, do also describe a Person's being brought into a *State of Grace* and Favour with God, by having a *clean Heart* created in him, and a *new Heart given to him*. And this was so particularly foretold of the *Gospel Times*, that it must be a strange inadvertency in *Nico-*

Psal. li. 10.

Ezek. xxxvi. 26. and other places.

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demus not to reflect on those Passages, which in such a likeness of Expression, describe the very same Change that our SAVIOUR here calls being a *born again*.

But that which yet farther condemns this *Jewish Ruler*, was, (according to *Dr. Whitby*,) a prevailing and common Notion amongst the *Jews*, — that when any Man became a *Profelyte* to their Religion, *He was to be look'd upon as an Infant new born*.

These several things may, all of 'em, be very helpful to our understanding this Doctrine at present; and I would rather choose to look upon 'em with such a view, than as merely serving to aggravate the Fault of *Nicodemus*.

From our LORD's explaining himself in this Matter, 'tis evident — that to be *Born again* includes something both *External*, and *Internal*: *Except a Man be born of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*.

Now this being *born of Water*, or made a *Profelyte by Baptism*, was so intelligible, that we find a bare mention of it is thought sufficient. And however Men may value their outward Privileges, yet if these are rested in, and the *greatest* stress be laid where the Gospel lays the
least,

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least, the Hopes and Pretensions of such will avail them very little.

'Tis a being *Born* of the *Spirit* that is chiefly insisted on: And without this none were to be look'd upon as Members of the *Messiah's* Kingdom, considered either as a Kingdom of *Grace*, or *Glory*.

I know not how we can better comprehend all this in a few words, than by saying, with one of our *English Expositors*, — “He that will enter into
“ the State of the Gospel, must be Bap-
“ tized; and He that will enter into
“ a State of Grace, and be fitted for Glo-
“ ry, must be Renewed.” Thus much is very plainly express'd in the *Epistle to Titus*; *According to his mercy he saved us by the washing of Regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost*, Tit. iii. 5.

Ignorance of this Work of the Blessed SPIRIT, and a vain boasting of External Ordinances and Advantages, we have reason to fear, is the Ruin of multitudes. Hence it is that Men, who profess the Christian Name, and are admitted into the Christian Church, are yet notorious for their ill Lives. And whereas, at *first*, it was the Glory of the Gospel to change the worst of Sinners; it is *now* reproach'd by many, as patronizing even

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the worst of Crimes. Christianity has sometimes found Men in a State of Brutish sensuality; but where it has savingly prevail'd, it has not left them in such a Condition. *Be not deceived,* (says the *Apostle* to the *Corinthians*,) *neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers ——— nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God.* And tho' it is added, *such were some of you*; yet we ought carefully to observe the Change that was wrought in them; *ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God,* 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11.

So that to be interested in this Work of the Spirit, is of the utmost Importance to us; and, in order to that, 'tis highly requisite we should have a right Notion and Understanding of it. I shall therefore, according to the best and most regular Thoughts I have been able to form of this matter, explain it farther to you in the following Particulars.

1. *To be born again, is to have something done in us, and for us, which cannot be done by us.* This is, beyond all Doubt and Controversie, the plain sense of Scripture. Less than this cannot be meant,

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meant, by those many high Expressions which the Sacred Writers frequently use: Such as, — being *Created again* in CHRIST JESUS, — and being made *new Creatures*; — being *raised to newness of Life*, even as CHRIST was *raised from the dead* by the Glory of the FATHER: So that adding these Expressions to this I am upon, a [*being born again*;] all laid together must undoubtedly signify, That something is effected for us, and wrought in us, which is intirely owing to the Power and Grace of GOD.

I shall speedily endeavour to guard against any False and Ill Consequences that Men may be tempted to draw from hence; but in the mean time it must be maintain'd, — that Regeneration is the work of the HOLY SPIRIT. There is one Passage in the 1st. of *John's Gospel*, the 13th, that does expressly deny any other Agency in this matter. *Which were born,* says the Evangelist, *not of Blood, nor of the will of the Flesh, nor of the will of Man, but of GOD.* The meaning of that place is this: *To become the Sons of GOD*, we must be *born of Him*; and that in such a sort as is not by *Blood*, or by any thing communicated to us in our first Generation: — Nor according to the *Will of the Flesh*; that is, any natural Inclinations

B 5

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clinations in our selves to what is Holy and Godlike:—Nor of the *Will of Man*; that is, the Persuasions and Influence of others like our selves: But it is wholly owing to the Agency and Grace of GOD. So in the 1st of *James* the 18th, we are told — that *of his own Will begat he us.*

Ezek. xi. 19.

These, with other places that Promise a *new Heart*; and

that GOD will take away the *stony Heart* out of our *Flesh*, and will give us *Hearts of Flesh*; and that

Jer. xxiv. 7.

--xxxii. 40.

He will put his fear into our *Hearts*, and write his

Law in our *inward parts*; and the Declaration, that it is not of him that willeth, or of him

that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy; These, I say, and such like Texts of Scripture, undoubtedly prove that the *Change*, here called the *Second Birth*, is of GOD.

From hence therefore, before we advance any thing farther, we may draw this *Conclusion*:—That since something is to be done in us, and for us, which cannot be done by us, we should be very earnest and unwearied in our Applications to GOD for his Grace and Spirit. This is evidently the most natural and just way of arguing, however some Men may indulge

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indulge to the quite contrary. There is certainly an *awkwardness* in Thinking, as well as Acting. And when this is encouraged by a slothful Temper, or a Prejudice against any particular Set of Men, and their Opinions; or when it is supported and improved by the suggestions of the Devil, it is hardly to be rectified. For otherwise one would think it impossible that ever the *Metaphors*—of being *Created a-new*,—*raised to newness of Life*,—and being *born again*,—should be pleaded by Men, as if they were *literally* to be understood: Which is downright to say—that an Unregenerate Man has no *Reason*, no *Life*, no *Being*. The same Almighty Power and Efficacy by which we were made at first, and shall be raised at last, is undoubtedly necessary to our Renovation at present: But then upon a Conviction of this, we should, with the greatest Concern, apply our selves to *Him* who has this All-sufficient Power and Grace. Thus we are wont to do in other cases where our Interest is concerned; to be very earnest in soliciting such, as have it in their Power to do that for us, which we are not able to do for our selves. And this is what the Sacred Scriptures every where require, and that in the plainest Expressions, in the Case of

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Regeneration; as I shal have occasion to shew more fully at the close of this Chapter.

II. That which is done in us and for us when we are said to be *born again*, I take to be this;—*the insufing of some inward Principle of Life and Action, to which we are naturally Strangers; and by communicating of which, such a Life begins as shall last for ever.* There is something, which so far prevails over all the Powers, Desires and Relishes of the Sensitive and Animal Nature, as to bring it into a thoro' Subjection and Subserviency. Hence it is, that a Man finds his corrupt Inclinations as powerfully cross'd, and as effectually kept under, by something *within* himself, as if he was debating the Matter with a Being *different* from himself. And he therefore acts under the controlling Power of something *Superiour* to himself. And if any Man that reads this, think it unintelligible, I can only assure him in the Words of our SAVIOUR, toward the close of his Conference with *Nicodemus*; *verily, verily we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen, and ye receive not our Witness.* Our SAVIOUR knew it by Intuition, and Observation of what was done upon *others*: Those that are Rege-
nerate

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nerate know it by Experience of what has been done in *themselves*: And, however those that are Strangers to this Work of Grace, may refuse to receive the Witness, yet it is nevertheless true and real.

This Principle of a new Life, I have said is *infus'd into us*, that it may be *sought* for, and esteem'd as something supernatural. It is not only a *Habit* of the Mind, but the Spring and *Cause* of every good and gracious Habit in us. From hence, probably, a Principle of Grace is called the *Root of the Matter*; to signify to us, among other things, that it is really different from the Soil in which it is planted: And that it is something brought to us by a Divine Hand. 'Tis a *Root* that would otherwise have remained foreign to our Nature, and we should for ever have been barren, and destitute of those *Fruits* that are the Product of it.

I have chosen to say farther, that *by communicating this Principle of Grace, such a Life begins as shall last for ever*, to put you upon observing this very comfortable Propriety in the use of this *Metaphor* of being *born again*; namely, our entering into such a State of Being, as much better deserves the Name of *Life*, than that which we are born to in this World. In our *First Birth*, we are born to *die*; in
our

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our *Second*, we are born to *live for ever*. In our *First Birth* we enter upon a manner of Existence suited to a changeable and perishing State of Things: In our *Second Birth* we begin a manner of living suited to an eternal Duration and Happiness. As, therefore, the new Life which hereby we receive will survive the former, the Commencement of it is very fitly called a *new Birth*.

There are *two Conclusions* I would draw from hence, for the better and fuller settling of this Point.

1. If there be such an inward Principle of Life and Action communicated in our Regeneration, it will follow—that a mere outward Change, and altering the Course of our Lives, is not sufficient to a Person's being born again. 'Tis possible, a Man may be reclaim'd from a loose and vicious way of living, only by external Motives and Inducements: or, by changing open and notorious Sins, for more secret and concealed ones; there may be a *seeming* Alteration, when there is not a *real one*: Or one Vice, it may be, is forsaken, in order to fall into another: Or Men may be wearied out with their Sins; and so are not properly said to *leave* them, but to *out-live* them. However this is certain,

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certain,--That a civil outward Deportment may be maintain'd, where there is nothing of the *Power of Religion* at the Heart. For so the *Apostle Paul* tells us, (who was far from magnifying any thing in himself before his Conversion,) that as *touching the Law*, meaning the outward Observance of it, *he was blameless.*

Phil. iii. 6.

So that we have abundant Reason to keep up the Distinction, betwixt *Restraining*, and *Renewing Grace*.

2. If it be only a new Principle of Life and Action that is infus'd in Regeneration, it will follow,—*That the new Birth does not give us new, and different natural Powers, and Faculties, from those which we had before.* As we have the same Bodies and bodily Organs; so we have also the same Souls, and intellectual Faculties, that we had in our natural State. 'Tis certain, that a Change very great passeth upon us; but then it is as certain, that we remain physically the *same* afterwards: That is, the Principle of Life and Action which is infus'd into us, new models our Souls, our Tempers, and the whole of our Behaviour; but it does not alter our Make as to any essential part of us. As we have the same Eyes, Ears and Senses; so we have also the same Understanding, Will, and Affections, that we had in an Unregenerate

rate

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rate State: But these are all differently used and employ'd, to what they were before. And the Change is great enough, to support me in what I have farther to advance, under another Head of Explication; to which I hasten,

III. When we are thus said to be *born again*, *We do as truly become new Creatures, as if we could in a natural Sense be born afresh, or had other kind of Beings given to us.* There needs no more than the *different Use and Exercise, of the same* reasonable Powers, to make us either as *Brutes*, or as *Angels*. And indeed the Change would not be so great, to see a Clod of Earth brighten into a Star; (since we know that an Earthly Body can reflect the Rays of the Sun;) as to see, a poor brutish Sinner become a Saint, shining with all the radiant Graces of a Christian, and ripening for Glory.

Such is the Change, that is made by the Grace and Spirit of God in the *new Birth*, that it very much resembles the first Creation of this visible World; wherein Light was brought out of Darkness, and Beauty out of Deformity, and Harmony out of Confusion. For so the Mind, in Regeneration, is enlightned; and all its jarring disorderly Passions and Affections,

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Affections, are brought under Rule and Government. Those Powers and Capacities, that lay wholly unexercis'd and unactive, are now taught to exert themselves: And those that were busied in a fruitless, or a hurtful manner, now are exalted to the most useful and comfortable Employments. In the *Apostles* comprehensive Language, *all old things are passed away, and all things are become new.*

The Distinction, indeed, between the Regenerate and Unregenerate, is not at present visible enough, to convince the World of common Spectators, that it is *so great* as really it is: But at the Day of Judgment, when those things that are now hid shall be revealed, the Difference shall be manifested to all. He that looks only on the rough Surface of the Seas, and observes the Mire and Dirt which is cast out by its Waves, may imagine there is nothing amiable or desirable in it: But he that has dived to its bottom, and discovered the Jewels and Treasures that lie buried there, will form a very different Judgment. The Man that is renewed, is greatly enriched by the Gifts, and Graces, of the Spirit of God; but yet there may be no Beauty, or Excellency, that shall appear to such as look no farther than the outside, and observe only the Corruptions

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tions that arise in his outward Actions and Conversation: But when Things, that now lie hid, shall be discovered, it will be quite otherwise. Hence it is that we read so often in Scripture of the *World's not knowing* such as belong to CHRIST: And St. *John*, speaking to those that were now the *Sons of GOD*, adds, that
1 John iii. 2. *it does not yet appear what we shall be.*

This, however, must be maintain'd; That, where things are spiritually discerned, and where there is a close and strict Enquiry into the Character of him that is said to be born again, he does appear even at present *more excellent than his Neighbour*; and such a one *knows himself*, to be quite another Person, than he was in his first and natural State. He has a *new Image* and Likeness stamp'd upon him, which grows more and more visible, both to himself, and all about him: His Behaviour and Conversation will be such, as to *shew forth the Virtues*, and Excellencies, of *Him who hath called him*.

Now from this Head two things are plainly deducible.

1. That a pretended *honouring the Grace of God*, and a *presumptuous Confidence in it*, whilst Men go on in their Sins, will by no means

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means argue that they are in a State of Grace. Mens *changing* their Opinions, or getting *new* Notions in Religion, will not prove that they are *born again*, if their Lives and Actions be not changed, so as to render them quite other Persons than they were in their natural corrupt State. This is so obvious, that I should not so much as have mentioned it, had I not met with Instances of Those, who have pretended to talk of *Free Grace* at such a rate, as if they hop'd to be *saved* by it, when they were utter Strangers to the *Renewing Power* of it. And some there are, who have distinguish'd themselves by a Set of Principles, whereby they pretend to magnify the *Riches of God's Grace* in its abounding *toward* them, when at the same time it has no suitable Effect and Influence *upon* them. As if, by a Decree in their Favour, God had engag'd himself, at all Adventures, to bring 'em to Heaven, whether they were made *fit* for it or not: Or as if they thought miraculous Grace would prepare 'em for it some *new way*; and not by the ordinary appointed Means of the Gospel. For, if they would receive the Assurances of Grace as they are settled in the Gospel, they would never pretend to an Interest in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, without such a Change as I am speaking of: Since
'tis

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'tis as exprefs as Words can make it,

2 Cor. v. 17. *If any Man be in CHRIST, he is a new Creature.* Those

Persons, then, will find themselves miserably mistaken, who, instead of being really changed, trust to some ineffectual Speculations; These will not avail them at last, how much soever at present they may be pleas'd with them, or how zealous soever they may appear for them.

2. For the same Reason it will also follow, — That *no Gifts or Attainments, how great and eminent soever they be, will pass for this new Birth, if there be not a new Life.* Judas, with all his Gifts, was a Lost Man. Simon Magus, notwithstanding all the Wonders, which History says, he wrought, yet had neither

Acts viii. 21. *part, nor lot in this matter;* his Heart and Life being unchanged and unrenewed. What the

Apostle says of Charity, must be said of this Change; tho' I had all

1 Cor. xii. beginning. *Languages that have been spoken by Men, yea tho' I*

had the Tongue of an Angel; and with these the intellectual Abilities of Men and Angels too; tho' I could understand all Mysteries and Sciences; tho' I had the Faith of such as could work Miracles; or was ready to impoverish my self in giving

Alms

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Alms to the Poor; yea tho' I might give my *Body to be burned*, as a Martyr to the best Cause in the World; yet if I am not a *new Creature*, all will avail me nothing. I heartily wish that such, as are valuing themselves upon their attainments in *human Learning*, or upon their *outward Profession* of Religion, and their *Sufferings* in common with others on account of their Profession, would allow themselves to enter into such a way of Thinking as this. And whilst some are valuing themselves upon their Conformity to the National Church; and others upon their strict Adherence to what they apprehend the purer Worship and Appointments of the Gospel; it were well if both would lay to Heart such a Text as that, — *neither Circumcision avail-eth any thing, nor Uncircumcision, but a new Creature*, Gal. vi. 15.

IV. *This being born again, is in some respect like our being born at first, Instantaneous and Perfect; but, in other respects, Regeneration may be look'd upon as Gradual and Progressive.* When first a Man is said to be born from above, he has every Principle, of Grace and Goodness, that is necessary to constitute him a Child of God: Tho' as yet all is but in min-

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miniature, and very inconsiderable, compared with what it may, in time, grow to. The new Creature is form'd, not like a *Statue*, in the making of which one Limb or Feature may be carv'd out and compleated, whilst all the rest lie Shapeless, and in the rough Stone; but 'tis form'd like a *Child* that is born into the World, which has all the Parts of the human Body at first, tho' very small and little, and must have time to grow to their full Size and Perfection. Those that are *born of the Spirit*, have the Divine Image and Likeness, as to every Essential part, drawn upon the Soul; but yet they are capable of continual Improvements, till they become Perfect, *as their Father which is in Heaven is perfect.*

Hence is it that the *Apostle* teaches us, by his own Example, not to take up an Opinion of our selves that our Attainments are sufficient as soon as we are thus renewed: Tho' we could say, with him, that *what things formerly were Gain to us, those we now count Loss for CHRIST*; yea, [that we are so much altered from what we were in our natural State] that we *count all things*, [even the best and greatest in this World] *but loss for the Excellency of the Knowledge of CHRIST JESUS our LORD*;

Phil. iii. 8.

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LORD; yet we are not to look upon our selves as *already perfect*: But this we are farther to do, *forgetting*
the Things that are behind, *ver. 13.*
to reach forth unto those things which are before. And another *Apostle* calls upon us, to grow in *Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST,* 2 Pet. iii. 18.

This, I thought it proper to make a distinct Head, for the sake of these *two* Conclusions.

1. *There can be no State betwixt that, of the Regenerate, and the Unregenerate.* Whatever Preparations there may be for such a Change, yet these are certainly to be distinguish'd from the Change it self. All Men are either born again, or not; there is no middle State that can be allowed: For that would infer, if any died in such a State, that they were disposed of accordingly in the other World; and appointed to some intermediate Place betwixt Heaven and Hell. Which is a Notion I need not stay to expose. There is something of more immediate Consequence to be guarded against, which I had chiefly in my Eye, upon the mention of this Head; namely, to prevent Mens taking up with any of those things
that

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that are preparatory to this new Birth, as if they were really to pass for it. Hence it is, that many have been carry'd into very sad and destructive Mistakes; who have imagin'd, that some short-liv'd Convictions, and ineffectual Purposes and Resolutions might pass for this Change; or that some partial regards to their Duty, which have arisen from their first serious Impressions, have been sufficient to denominate them new Creatures. And so resting in what has been only preparatory, they have at last fall'n even from that.

2. *There may be such as are truly Regenerate and born again, that are yet very weak in Grace, and very little in their Spiritual Stature.* 'Tis possible such a change may be wrought upon Men, when yet the Infant State of the new Creature may hardly discover that it is so. However if any Man be really pass'd from Death to Life, this Life will shew it self by growing every day more vigorous and active: And if any Man be pass'd from Darkness to Light, this Light, tho' very dim at present, will shine more and more unto a perfect Day. But for this Reason we should not rely on any thing that has been done for us, so as to grow secure,

PROV. iv. 18.

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secure, or negligent, upon an apprehension that all is safe and well: For if what has been wrought in us be indeed of G O D, it will be continually advancing till it comes to Perfection. As for God, *his Work is perfect.*

Deut. xxxii. 4.

This Work of our Regeneration is so Perfect. At first, in every essential *part*; and therefore fixes in us a regard to *all* God's Commandments: And perfect at last, in every attainable *Degree*, and therefore makes our *Growth* and Improvement necessary.

V. *This Change which is called the new Birth, may be, and commonly is, effected, by the outward means of Grace.* For as in this 3^d of *John* we are said to be *born of the Spirit*; so, in the *Epistle of James*, Regeneration is ascribed to the *Word of G O D*. And in the former place we read of being *born of Water*, [that is by *Baptism*] as well as *the Spirit*. 'Tis certain, that outward Ordinances and Appointments are, of *themselves*, insufficient to produce such an Effect; but it is as certain, from the whole Current of Scripture, that the SPIRIT of G O D does make use of such *means*, and ordinarily Renew the Heart in and by these.

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26 *What it is to be Born again.*

There have been, indeed, miraculous Productions of this kind; and G O D has sometimes manifested himself to those that *enquired not after him*; yea, to those who, with a *Persecuting Blasphemous* Temper of Mind, have set themselves *against him*: But such Cases are to be look'd upon, just in the same manner as we do upon the miraculous Cure of Diseases; or a miraculous supply of bodily Wants, which some, upon *Extraordinary* Occasions have obtained. Such Miracles, both of Grace, and Providence, were necessary to the first Settling of Christianity in the World: And they may be wrought whenever, and wherever, it pleases G O D suddenly to restore, and advance the Credit of decay'd Religion. But I think these Cases should no more be taken into our common accounts of Regeneration, than the Removing of the most *inveterate* Distempers with *a word*, or the feeding of *five Thousand* with *five Loaves and two Fishes*, are to be taken into the usual Method of healing our Diseases, or providing our daily Bread.

That Man would certainly be accounted very inconsiderate, and vain in his Expectations, that should sit still and refuse to seek after and provide his necessary

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cessary Food, because he reads that *Elijah* was fed by *Ravens*, and that the *Clouds* rain'd down *Manna* on the *Israelites*. And is it not every whit as wild and unjustifiable, for Men to neglect the means of Grace, and expect to be converted by some miraculous *Appearance* of *CHRIST* from Heaven, because the *Apostle Paul* was so? or to promise themselves that they shall be renewed suddenly on their *Death-Bed*, because the *Thief* on the *Cross* was savingly changed in his last Moments?

He that can be so wretchedly misled, as in this last Case, may as well advance one step farther; and promise himself, that he shall go to *Heaven* without seeing *Death*; because he reads of One, that in a *fiery Chariot* was taken up thither: Yea, I will venture to say, that, on this account, he has more reason to expect a Translation, than he has to look for such a miraculous Renovation: Because he has *two* Instances of Persons being taken to Heaven without Dying (viz. *Enoch* and *Elias*;) but he has only *one* Instance in the whole Bible, of a Conversion so extraordinary as that of the *Crucified Malefactor*.

Let the *New Birth* I have been explaining, be look'd upon, then, as a

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Change that is generally wrought, by the outward and ordinary Means of Grace. And let it be considered, that there is no case in which those Means would fail of obtaining such an End, could we procure the Blessing of God in, and with them.

From hence we may safely Conclude,

1. *That Men ought to apply themselves, with great Diligence, to these appointed Means.* As we learn from what has been said, that none should encourage themselves to hope for Extraordinary Grace, in the neglect of the common and ordinary Method of Salvation; so no Man can reasonably hearken to Despondent Thoughts, whilst he does, in a way of Duty, cry to God for Renewing Grace and Mercy. *What Means* are to be used, and *what Method* we are to take in our Applications to God, I shall lay before you in the 3^d Chapter: My Business here, is only to establish this Conclusion,—That we ought to look upon the *new Birth*, as a Change that *may be* attained by us; and so to seek after it with suitable Concern and Diligence.

And if this was not really the Case, wherefore should God call upon those
that

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that are in a State of Corruption, to cast away from them all their Transgressions, and to make 'em new Hearts, and new Spirits?

Ezek. xviii. 31.

Wherefore should he declare with so much Solemnity, *As I live I have no pleasure in the Death of the Wicked, but that the wicked*

Ch. xxxiii. v. 11.

turn from his way and live? And then wherefore should he call after Sinners with so much Importunity, *Turn ye, Turn ye, for why will ye die?* wherefore should our SAVIOUR put Men upon striving to enter in at the strait Gate?

And bid us ask, seek, and knock; assuring us, that God gives the Spirit to them that believingly and importunately ask him?

Matth. vii. 7.

wherefore should one Apostle urge us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling?

Philip. ii. 12.

and another to draw nigh to God, as one that is willing

Jam. iv. 8.

and ready to draw nigh to us? Wherefore, I say, should these Scriptures, and many others of the like Import, speak to us in such a manner, if the Change I have described, were not attainable in the use of ordinary Means.

But possibly it may be said, can a Man do any thing towards his own Birth,

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or *Creation*, or *Resurrection*, by all which this Change is described? To this I do readily answer, that we are actually called upon so to do. *Awake thou*

Eph. v. 14. *that sleepest, and arise from the Dead; and CHRIST shall give thee Life.* Metaphors are generally made use of, in Scripture, with some one considerable view; and to give light in some particular Matter, for the sake of which they are produc'd; but it is a manifest wrong to the Design of 'em, to stretch 'em to every thing which a brisk and warm Imagination may suggest. Suppose, as to this very Point, that you explain a Man's being *Dead in Sin*, to signify his being able to do no more, than a Man *naturally dead*, is, to revive himself: When you have done so, carry this explication of the *Metaphor* to another *Text*, and see how far it is from being true and agreeable there. Such as are

Rom. vi. 2. *alive to God, are said to be dead to Sin; which according to the Sense just mention'd, must denote — that such are no more able to do a sinful Action, than a dead Body is to move or stir. And if there are any that will not own this to be a falshood, they must blot that Text out of the Bible,*
There

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There is not a just Man upon Earth that doth good, and sinneth not: And at the same time, they must talk against all the Observation and Experience in the World.

But, dropping all Metaphors, it is farther objected against the plain and express Scriptures I have quoted, — That our SAVIOUR tells us plainly, whilst there are *many* that strive to enter in at the strait Gate, yet there are *few* that find it: And again he says expressly, *that no Man can come unto him except the Father draw him:*

Eccles. vii. 20.

John vi. 44.

And the Apostle tells us that it is God who *worketh in us, both to will, and to do, of his own good pleasure.*

To which I think the Answer is very obvious. When these and the foregoing places are compared together, they amount evidently to this, and no more; *We must work, because GOD works in us, and with us; we must go to CHRIST by the Grace of GOD assisting and enabling us; and we must strive in a believing expectation of GOD's accomplishing our Desires; because those that have made Attempts, without this Dependence on him, and Help from him, have been disappointed and baffled. And that leads to a*

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2. Conclusion, *That for the Success of all Means, and the effecting this happy Change of the new Birth, our Reliance must be on GOD, and him alone.* We must make the best use we can of all outward Helps and Advantages; but we must not *Trust* to these: 'Tis GOD alone that can give a Principle of new Life; (concerning which I have spoken very fully in the beginning of this Discourse;) and therefore we should take care to fix all our Hope on him. *Grace* is the Gift of GOD, as well as *Glory*; and should be sought for and esteemed as a *Gift*, in what way soever it may be bestowed. If any *Means* had been sufficient, of themselves, to work such a Change in Men, it must have been the Preaching and Miracles of JESUS CHRIST when he was here upon Earth; and yet we find, Those that allowed Him to speak *as never Man spake*; and were sensible that he proved his words by such *Works as never Man did*; notwithstanding such Convictions, turned away from him and forsook him. But afterwards, when GOD sent his SPIRIT to work upon the Hearts of Men, in and with the preaching of the Gospel, we read of *Thousands* Converted at a time. Yea those very Administrations, which Men of Wit and Learning

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ing have scorn'd and derided, have yet, by the mighty Power of GOD, produced such Effects as the wisest and greatest might be glad to own.

To sum up all therefore in a little; we are taught to pray, *Turn us, O LORD! and then we shall be turned,* Lam. v. 21.
for thou art the LORD our

GOD. And the more I am convinced, that this Change is of GOD; the more earnestly, and importunately, should I cry unto Him, that *performeth all things for me.*

Here, Reader! stay a while: Review the Heads of what thou hast been reading; And say, if thou canst, that this Doctrine of the *new Birth* is a Doctrine not to be understood. I am very sensible indeed, that after all my Care to explain it, in the most orderly, and affecting manner I could; yet if the *Good Spirit* of GOD is not pleased to give thee a discerning Mind, and if he does not *open thine Eyes* to see the Evidence and Importance of what has been suggested to thee, it will be of very little service. But if GOD does graciously concur with these Endeavours, He can render them as useful to *Thee*, as they have been to some *others*: And however inconsiderable

34 *What it is to be Born again.*

they may seem in themselves, this will stamp a value upon them.

“ Thus may it please thee, O Father
“ of Lights! to Enlighten those that sit
“ in Darknefs, and in the Region of the
“ Shadow of Death: Give them the
“ Knowledge of Salvation, for the Re-
“ mission of their Sins; and so let the
“ Day-spring from on High visit their
“ Souls. One Ray from thee, blessed
“ GOD! would make Day in the most
“ benighted Breast. Be thou, there-
“ fore, the Teacher of those that are
“ yet ignorant of Thee, and of their
“ Way to thee; And bring them, out of
“ their natural and sinful *Darknefs*, into
“ thy *marvellous Light*.



CHAP.

C H A P II.

*Wherein 'tis prov'd, that to be
Born again, is necessary to Sal-
vation.*

I Had thought, after the *Explaining* of this *Change*, which our SAVIOUR calls a being *Born again*, to have added next, the *Means* of attaining it: But when I consider'd, how little agreeable what is advanced would be, to the *Taste of the present Age*; and that, in the Preaching on this Subject, I had met with a very cold Reception, from such as I was particularly desirous to have made some good Impressions upon; it then appeared highly requisite, immediately to prove the Importance and *Necessity* of this Doctrine of the *new Birth*.

And could I now speak with a Voice that should reach the whole World, I would proclaim it, — “ That whatever Nation
“ Men are of, or whatever Party they
“ belong to, and whatever their Figure,
“ or Characters may be, here on Earth,
“ *Except they be born again, they shall not*
“ *see the Kingdom of GOD.* And 'tis at
thy Peril, Man! whoever thou art that
C 6 hearest

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hearest or readeſt theſe Words, if thou dareſt to ſhew a diſguſt, or even a diſregard to them. This *Text* ſtands in thy *Bible*, as with a Hand pointing to it; and a double Seal [*verily, verily*] ſet upon it; that declares it one of the *unalterable Edicts* of Heaven. Let the *Prophaneneſs* of the World, or the *vain Religion* of the World, ſuggeſt what they will; if thou art not *Born again*, thou art not in a *State of Salvation*.

Our SAVIOUR'S Words are very Poſitive, and they are very Plain too.

Seeing and Enjoying GOD, ſeeing and entering into his Kingdom, are in Scripture Language the ſame thing: And the *Kingdom of GOD*, you know, is frequently to be underſtood of the *Gospel State*, or the Kingdom of Grace; and alſo of the *Heavenly State*, or the Kingdom of Glory. So that the full Meaning of our LORD'S Aſſertion muſt be this; — *Except a Man be born again*, he cannot be accounted a *True Chriſtian in this World*, —or be admitted into the *Society* of the *Bleſſed Spirits above*.

Theſe *two* things I ſhall ſet my ſelf diſtinctly to prove. O that I might hope for ſuch Succeſs in this Attempt, as that none, who read or hear what I have to ſay, might deceive themſelves
with

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with a *False Name*, or a *False Hope*; (that is, calling themselves *Christians*, or expecting the *Happiness* of such;) whilst they are Strangers to this *new Birth*!

I. I shall establish the Truth of this Assertion, — *That no Man, can be a real Christian, except he be thus Changed and Renewed.* For

I. Without this, there cannot be an accepting of JESUS CHRIST, as our *Teacher* and *Instructor*. 'Tis mockery to call him our *Master*, or *Leader*, if we are not willing to be *Taught* by him. And 'tis in vain that we profess to receive *some things* from him, if we do not subscribe to the *whole* of his Instructions and Revelations. Now then, consider it; —our SAVIOUR insists upon this as the *first* thing, to be learnt and understood by *Nicodemus*, when he address'd him as a *Teacher come from GOD*. It is a matter of such Importance, in our professing Christianity, to be *born again*; that, 'tis necessary to prepare us, for the Reception of *all the other* Doctrines of the Gospel. If the natural Pride, Sensuality, and Hardness, of our Hearts be not removed, we shall never be brought to a right understanding of the Method of Salvation by a Redeemer; nor to a due submission to
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the disposals of Providence; nor indeed to any regular *subjection* to the *Father of Spirits*, so as to have a just and prevailing Sense of our Obligations to him. However therefore, Men may complement CHRIST, by calling him MASTER and LORD; or rather think to do honour to *themselves*, by professing to be his *Followers* and *Disciples*; yet in truth and reality they *reject* him, when they disregard a Doctrine, that He has made the Leading and Principal one, in his Religion. What is this, but, in effect, to make void the *whole Gospel*? and to weaken the force of every *other* Doctrine, so as to hinder its proper Influence upon us?

To this, undoubtedly to this, is owing the Unsuccessfulness of Preaching, in a great measure, at this Day: Tho' the other Doctrines of the Gospel may be set in the clearest Light; tho' Holiness, in its several Branches, may be press'd with great warmth and seriousness, and with those Arguments that one would think irresistible; yet we find, that the Knowledge of Men, and their strongest Convictions, in many Cases, serve only to *condemn*, not to sanctify or *reform* them. How many are there who can readily rehearse the several Articles of their *Creed*; and are convinced, it is their
Duty.

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Duty to observe God's *Commandments*; who, for all this, live and act just as Men would do, that believed and acknowledged no such things? Whereas if Men were thoroughly instructed, concerning the Necessity of their being *Born again*; and were taught to conceive aright, of a Principle of new Life being derived from above; and would be persuaded, in the first and chief place, to seek for the Renewing Converting Influences of the Blessed SPIRIT; all other Matters, both of Faith, and Practice, would then become intelligible, affecting, and easie: And the whole Scheme of Christianity would appear, a quite different thing, to what 'tis generally esteem'd. But, without this, we cannot be said to receive CHRIST, as our *Prophet* and *Teacher*: And therefore in vain call our selves by his Name, or pretend to be his Disciples.

2. *Except a Man be born again*, he cannot be interested in the *Death* of CHRIST, as making *Atonement* and *Satisfaction* for him. We are told, — that for this End CHRIST both *died* and *rose again*—that he might be a PATTERN to us, of *dying to Sin*, and *being made alive unto God*: Or according to ano-

Rom. vi. 10, 11.

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ther way of Expression,—that our *old Man* might be crucify'd with him; and that we might be raised, with him, to walk in newness of Life. But now, this *Design* of our SAVIOUR'S Death is *lost*, if we be not, in such a Sense, conformed to Him.

Yea, if we consider his Death as a PROPITIATION for Sin, it will be unavailable to our Souls, except we are thus renewed. According to that common Distinction; CHRIST died to save us--from our Sins,--not in them. And his Death, without us, will not avail us; if there be not also this Work of the SPIRIT, within us. 'Tis not enough, that Satisfaction is made for Sin; if we are not also delivered, by Almighty Grace, from the reigning Power of it. What would it signify to a condemn'd Criminal, to have a Pardon procur'd for him; if at the same time he was sick of a mortal Distemper? Except his Disease be healed, as well as the Sentence of Death taken away, 'tis in vain to promise him Life: So, notwithstanding the Purchase of Pardon by JESUS CHRIST, if the Distemper of which we are a dying be not also removed, we are undone for ever. Let the value of a REDEEMER'S Blood be never so great, in the sight of GOD; yet, if it is not apply'd, for Healing and
Cleansing.

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Cleansing, unto Us, we shall be never the better for it. And therefore, except we are *Born* again, CHRIST cannot be a *Saviour* to us. However me may, now, be called by *his Name*; yet, hereafter he will profess, unto all that are Unregenerate, *I never knew you.*

3. *No Man can acknowledge, the Sovereignty and Dominion of CHRIST, as the Gospel requires, unless such a Change be wrought in him: And without this, no Man can be a real Christian.* 'Tis by this means, that our LORD has appointed Subjects to be gathered, and Members to be admitted into his Kingdom. Hence it is, that Those who belong to him, are said to be *called and chosen out of the World*; and to have a *Life hid with CHRIST in GOD*; and so, when Colos. iii. 3, 4. CHRIST, who is their *Life*, shall appear, then shall they also appear with him in *Glory*. It is by being *born again*, that the Throne of a REDEEMER is fix'd in the Hearts of Men: And, by this alone, they are brought into a perfect Subjection to his Method of ruling them. His *Kingdom is not of this World*; nor his manner of governing, suited to the Forms of Government here: And 'tis an Argument of very great Ignorance, or something worse,

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worse,---for Men to account *themselves*, or pretend to make *others*, the Subjects of CHRIST's Kingdom, merely because of their outward Conformity to the Institutions of his Worship, and their complying with a particular Form of Church Government. Nothing less, than a thorough Change, and Renovation of the Heart and Mind, can translate a Man, from the Kingdom and Power of *Satan*, to the Kingdom of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

On this account, as well as others before-mention'd, our SAVIOUR might justly reproach *Nicodemus*; --- That he should be a *Ruler in Israel*, and yet appear so insensible, of the vast *Change* it must make in a Man, --- to pass from *one Kingdom and Government, to another*: Whenever any Stranger came to settle amongst the *Jews*, the Alteration both of his *Maxims*, and *Manners*, was *so* great; that, one would have expected, *Nicodemus* should readily conceive, of the Alteration that must be made in all such, as became the Subjects of CHRIST's Kingdom: Which being a *Spiritual Kingdom*, must needs differ exceedingly from all the Kingdoms of *this World*; and so must require, a very different Spirit, and turn of Mind, in those that are called to act in it.

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In the Gospel Scheme of Government, there are so many things, not only *above*, but *contrary* to, the Dictates of *corrupt* Reason; that, a Principle of spiritual divine Life must necessarily gain the Ascendency, before such Rules of Conduct and Behaviour can be duly observed. For Example; we are required to prefer the Interest of a REDEEMER, and his Religion in the World, above all our *Enjoyments* and *Relations*; yea, above *Life* it self: We are therefore farther required to be *patient* under *Sufferings* and *Afflictions*; to be *watchful* and *constant* in our *Devotions*; to *forgive* our *Enemies*, to endeavour after their *Conversion* and *Reformation*; and to *relieve*, as we have Ability and Opportunity, the *Necessity* of the *Poor*. Now let us, by these and such like things, try how far any Person, in a *natural State*, is like to be obedient to CHRIST; and to live in Subjection to him; and we shall soon find, that these are things so contrary to us, as, not to be comply'd with, till we are *born again*. We are naturally fond of Life, and the outward Comforts of it; apt to fret at every thing that is troublesome

Luke xiv. 26.

Luke xxi. 19.
with the Context.

1 Pet. iv. 7.

Matth. v. 44.
Rom. xii. 20.

Gal. vi. 10.

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some and painful to us; averse to Prayer, Hearing, Reading, and the Exercises of Religion; full of Resentment against such as offend us; and ready to despise, and turn away from, those that are in mean and distressed Circumstances: So that except we are *Changed*, and made *New Creatures*, we shall never submit to such Rules of Conduct, as these are.

Put all together, and then ask your selves; --- Can that Man be a *Christian*, that neither learns of CHRIST as a *Teacher*; nor is interested in him as a *Saviour*; nor can be subject to him as a *King*? I wonder Men are not ashamed of the Falshood of those Pretensions, that are so apparently different from their real Characters: Or that any Man can satisfy himself with a Profession of Christianity, who has no regard to the Import of such a Profession, and the Obligations under which it lays him.

But the *Formal Christian* will say, Do not I *perform the Duties of Religion*, and *attend upon the Worship of God*, according to the Direction of the Gospel? yea, do I not comply with that *peculiar Institution of a crucify'd Saviour*, to eat and drink at a *Communion Table*? Which many, concerning whom we may hope

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hope well, do not yet go so far as to do:
And can I after all this be thought unworthy of the Name of a *Christian*?

To such I answer; That you have indeed a Claim to the sacred *Name*, and to all the *outward Privileges*, of Christians; and you are look'd upon, as such, by Us: But, at the same time, you may appear quite otherwise, in the Esteem and Account of Almighty God.

The outward Performance of Religious Duties, however it may entitle us to the good Opinion of Men; yet cannot avail us in the sight of God, if there be not such an *Attention*, such an *Affection*, and such a *Steddiness* and *Perseverance*, as the Gospel requires: In all which, the Services of those Men, will be found faulty, who are Strangers to the *new Birth*.

The natural Man, who is destitute of a Principle of Divine Life, has no such Concern about the *Spirituality* of his Worship, and the *fixedness* of his *Heart* in Religious Exercises; as the Man that is savingly chang'd, and renewed, is acted by. An external Devotion is what such a one contents himself with; altho' it goes no farther than a *Lip-Service*, or
a *Bodily Exercise*. Isa. xxix. 13.

Hence

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Hence it comes to pass that the Spirit is *cold* and *unaffected*; and knows nothing of that Fervour, and exceeding Pleasure, which the real Christian is frequently transported with. Have I not seen two Persons, joyning in the same Prayer, or hearing the same Sermon; yet as distant, in the Frame of their Minds, as Heaven and Earth? One trifling, and rambling, with his Eyes and his Thoughts, after a thousand Vanities; when he that has been next him, has thought himself at the very Gate of Heaven. One sleeping; or it may be, setting himself against what is said; when Another, in the same Seat, has been eagerly catching every Word that has been spoken; and has thought, that what he heard was enough to command his Attention, for ever. Such is the Difference converting Grace makes.

Farther; he that is in an Unregenerate State, is soon *weary* of every good Work: He is glad of Excuses to put by, or make short, every Exercise of a religious Nature: And is ready, upon any pressing Occasion, to throw off All. *Will the Hypocrite always call upon God?* If it be for his Gain, or Preferment; or however, if it appear necessary for the Securing what he has; he can wholly *lay aside* his Thoughts

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Thoughts of Religion: Or, in the most material Points, can *alter* them: He is ready to do *either*, as the Times, and his Circumstances require. Whereas the real Christian is one that is *stedfast*, and *unmoveable*; *always abounding*

in the Work of the LORD. He 1 Cor. xv. 58. that is *born again*, is endued with a Principle, that will carry him thro' all Tryals; and render him superiour to all Oppositions; and enable him to conquer all Temptations; (I mean, as to the final issue of them;) which can be said of no Other Man.

Since, therefore, Men may attend upon *Sacraments*, as well as other parts of religious Worship, without a becoming Temper and Disposition of Mind; these are only to be look'd upon, as external *Badges* of Christianity, not as certain *Evidences* of it. And from our own Observation we are assured,---that Sacramental Vows and Promises are very little minded, in the *making*,---and much less in the *keeping* of them,---by some that frequent those Solemnities. Or if, at such times, there may be something of a more than ordinary Seriousness; yet, by one Temptation or other, we very often see those sacred Bonds broken; and Persons give themselves a Loose to act, as if they had never come under such Obligations.

So

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So that upon the whole, it can be no Breach of Charity to say, ---that many are enroll'd among the Number of Communicants, whose *Names are not written in the Book of Life.* And, therefore, there is a great deal of difference, betwixt---a Man's being allow'd, to pass for a Christian, *now*; ---and his being found, really such, *at last*; without which, He cannot be admitted into Heaven.

But before I set my self to enlarge on that, it is very fit to add; That, even *at present*, the *distinguishing Privileges* and Blessings of the *real* Christian are such, as these *nominal* Christians intermeddle not with: It may be said concerning them, with reference to these *Privileges*, that they have *neither Part nor Lot in the Matter.*

The grand Blessing of the Gospel is, *Peace with God*: But it is impossible to obtain this, if we are not made *new Creatures.* The Favour of God, is indeed, the *Purchase* of CHRIST; but 'tis what none, shall be interested in, that are not *prepared* for it. He will never present Any, to the Father, as Objects of his special Love, till they are *fit* to be presented to him. We must be restored to the *Likeness* of the Deity, or we can never be restored to his complacential Love. Hence it is that the *new Birth*, by which

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we are *created again in the Image of GOD*, becomes necessary to our being qualify'd, for the Marks of his special Favour.

Another very high Privilege of the Gospel, is, our *Union and Communion* with CHRIST. We are made *one with him*; and derive all our Supplies from him: Which cannot possibly be, except the *same Mind, be in us, which was also in CHRIST JESUS*. All the Members of his *Body* must, in some measure, be conformed to their *Head*: Unless we should suppose, that this mystical Body is like the *Image of Nebuchadnezzar*; the Head *Gold*, but the Feet *Iron and Clay*: And then what must become of such a Text as that, — *Be ye holy, for I am holy*? Or where would be the just reasoning of that other place, — *what Communion hath Light with Darknes*? and *what Concord hath CHRIST with Belial*? ii Cor. vi. 14, 15.

Farther; we cannot have *Peace* in our own *Consciences*, nor obtain a settled composed Temper of Mind, without such a Change. This is necessary to remove our Confusions, our Guilt, our Fears, and our reigning Corruptions.

And then again; those Joys and Consolations that proceed from the good SPIRIT of GOD, are only to be expected as consequent upon his *renewing Influences*

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and Operations. Where he is not a *converting*, he will not be a *comforting* Spirit.

Now let him, that readeth, understand: And if he does so, I am persuaded, he must be convinced, that *no Man can be a real Christian, except he be born again*. Without this, he cannot perform the Duties of Religion aright; nor can he be interested in the peculiar and most desirable Privileges of Christianity: And therefore whatever he may seem to *Be*, or to *Do*, in the Eye of the World, he neither *Is*, nor *Does* what God requires and expects from him. So that however he may pass for a Christian at *present*, he shall not be admitted to the Happiness of such at *last*. This I am now to insist on, by shewing,

II. *That no Man shall enter into the Kingdom of God above, or dwell in his glorious Presence in Heaven, unless he be born again*. And here let me afresh summon the Attention of him, that hears, or reads: If what has been said, already, has made no suitable Impressions; yet something may, now possibly, be offer'd that shall find a *nearer and quicker* way to thy Heart.

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May I not suppose, it is a Pleasure to thee, to *hear* of Heaven? And that thou art sometimes, ready to *talk* of it too? Nay, is not the *Hope of being saved*, become a familiar Expression, in all parts of thy Conversation? What, if after all the pleasing things thou hast heard of that Blissful Place, and all thy presumptuous Hope of arriving at it, thou should'st never come there? Canst thou bear such a Thought, without being startled and concern'd? Well, I am now in plain Terms to assure thee, that except thou art *renewed*, and *born again*, thou shalt *never enter into Heaven*.

1. Thy LORD and SAVIOUR has *most expressly declared this*, and his Faithfulness stands engaged to make it good. Besides the Text I am upon, and the Repetition of the same thing a little after; 'tis made as indispensably necessary to Salvation, in other places of Scripture, as in these. Matth. xviii. 3. *Except ye be converted, and become as little Children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* And again, Acts iii. 19. *Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out, when the Times of refreshing shall come from the Presence of the LORD.* And in Heb. xii. 14. we are told, that with-

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out Holiness no Man shall see the LORD; that is, Holiness of Nature, which is productive of Holiness in the Life. Once more, Rev. xxi. He that sate upon the Throne, is represented as saying, Behold, I make all things new: Upon this it is, that those who overcome, are made to inherit all things; even as thus renewed: But without this, it is absolutely determin'd, in the last Verse of that Chapter, there shall in no wise enter into it (the Heavenly Jerusalem) any thing that defileth.

Now can it be expected that, after all this, GOD should not keep to his Word? If such Declarations as these be look'd upon as false, the Promises of Happiness joyn'd with them must be false too.

They are wretched Mistakes, which, on both hands, Men run into; when they think, that an infinitely holy unchangeable GOD will deal, either more *mercifully*, or more *severely*, with them, than he has spoken in his Word. Yet so it is; that, whilst some of timorous and melancholy Dispositions, can hardly be persuaded to believe, GOD will be so *gracious* and *merciful* as the Scriptures represent him; there are others of more sanguine Tempers, that are ready to conclude, GOD will not condemn them to endless Misery,

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ry, altho' they live in those Sins, against which, *everlasting Destruction* from the Presence of the LORD, is most expressly denounced. Thus Men are ready to judge, of the great GOD, by *themselves*; and because They do not so carefully observe their *friendly Promises*, nor so fully execute their *hasty Threatnings*, as to make 'em good without varying from them, therefore they conclude it is thus with GOD.

Whereas the very Foundation, and Principle, of all Religion, is the TRUTH of GOD. For if it could be supposed, that GOD dealt *deceitfully* with his Creatures, or that he would *vary* from the settled Rules of his Government and Procedure; so as to become either *Better*, or *Worse* than his Word; he would no longer be a proper Object of that Honour, or Trust, or Obedience, which He requires of us. Wheresoever therefore, any thing is expressly insisted on as a *Term of Salvation*, there can be no dispensing with it; no Admission into Heaven *without* it; nor will any thing, of our contriving, be accepted in the *room* of it.

It is not what way *I would prescribe*, if I was to chuse the Method of obtaining eternal Life; but the way settled and appointed by GOD, that every Man ought

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to study, and with which he must intirely comply. Let Men lay what Schemes of Salvation they please; let 'em insist upon the common Forms of Worship, or a Heat and Zeal for a particular Party, as the way to Heaven; or let 'em contrive, in some *singular* and reserved way of *their own*, to give up themselves to GOD; yet if no real thoro' Change be made in their Souls, they are still to seek for the true way to Salvation. It is the express Declaration of our LORD, and all the Powers on Earth shall be never able to alter his Measures and Proceedings, *Except a Man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.* If it was becoming the Divine Goodness, and Perfection, to make such a Declaration; infinite Truth, and Justice, require it should be *made good*: GOD will not act, inconsistently with his Word, to save any. But consider farther:

2. *It is wholly disagreeable to the Purity and Holiness of GOD, (as well as his Faithfulness and Unchangableness,) to admit such, into his Presence and Favour, as are unsanctify'd and unrenewed.* The Scripture has described the *Abhorrence* which there is to *Sin* in the *Divine Nature*, by things that are to us most loathsome and

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and detestable. A Creature *lying in its Blood*, and in a State of Putrefaction, is not more shocking and offensive to us; than one that

Ezek. xvi. 6.

lies in Sin, is to G O D. Yea, *Death* itself, which to our Nature is the most terrible of all things, cannot be more our Aversion, than *Sin* is the Aversion of a holy G O D. Those who live wickedly are therefore said to be *dead*

in Trespasses and Sins. By Ephes. ii. 1.

these Representations, we may form some Notion of Sin's Contradiction to the divine Nature; and thence we must conclude, the necessity of its being taken away, before we can be admitted into the favourable Presence of G O D.

Farther; we read, of G O D's *hating the Workers of Iniquity*, and of his being *angry with the Wicked every Day*; which are Expressions that undoubtedly intimate, his being as effectually turn'd away from, or set against, impenitent unrenewed Sinners; as we are, against those things, that are the Objects of our Hatred or deserved Anger. For, tho' we are by no means to think, there are such Passions as these in Almighty God; yet we may conceive, of his dealing with the Wicked, by a wise and prudent Magistrate's dealing with those, that have done all that ever they could to

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injure his Authority, and to bring the Laws into Contempt.

But, that I may give you the clearer Notion of God's abhorring and rejecting the *Workers of Iniquity*, you may take the account of their Case, in short, thus: Man being, at first, made up of two different Natures, *Flesh* and *Spirit*; the Laws of his Creation, most certainly oblig'd him, to have been govern'd by the Dictates of that Nature which was the *noblest* and most *excellent*: This, his *Maker* requir'd: This, *in reason*, one would have expected. However, such was Man's Sin and Folly, that it proved quite otherwise: He was soon drawn away to gratify his *Senses*, whilst he disgraced his *better Powers*. Hereupon his Maker, being justly displeased, appointed the *Separation* of that Soul and Body, by *Death*, which acted so *ill*, when *united*. Nevertheless, after he had *appointed it unto Men to die*, he contriv'd a farther way for recovering the *Soul*, out of this unhappy *Subjection* to sensible and corruptible things: And promis'd, upon such a Restoration of the *Soul*, to restore that *Happiness* Man had *lost*; yea, to raise him to a Heavenly *Paradise*. Now, if notwithstanding such Grace as this, Men will still prefer the *Animal Life*, above the *Spiritual*; what
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can they expect, but that their throwing such an aggravated Contempt, upon the *Father of Spirits*, and the *Spiritual Happiness* he proposes, should end in their Banishment from *Both*? Yea, how can it be otherwise, whilst they are pursuing those things which carry them, still farther, and farther, from the divine Being, but, that at last they should be remov'd to an eternal Distance from that *GOD*, to whom they have made themselves *utterly disagreeable*? And it will follow from hence, that,

3. *The unrenewed Mind is as much set against the Happiness of Heaven, as the great GOD is set against the Admission of such a one into it.* So that if we could conceive of an unregenerate Person, as actually got into the Presence of *GOD* above, it would be no Happiness to him, to be there.

Can two walk together, says the Prophet, except they be agreed? Would it be any Pleasure for two Persons to live continually together, whose Inclinations, Wills, and Dispositions are *opposite* and *cross* to each other? Would there not be an earnest desire of more suitable Company and Society? What Pleasure then can a Man, that is set upon things *sensible* and *sinful*, have, in the Presence of

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that Being, whose Nature, and Will, and Blessedness is intirely *spiritual* and *holy*?

Either GOD, or the *Sinner*, must be *changed*, before there can be any *Agreement* between them: And till there is a Conformity and an Agreeableness, there can be no Happiness: And so to spend an Eternity together, would be a most undesirable thing. Now, can the Sinner be so foolish and blasphemous as to imagine, that GOD should cease to be infinitely perfect and holy? or that he should become *such a one as himself*? Common Sense, one would think, could not fail of directing him rather to conclude,—that the Change must be in *his own Soul*; and that *his Will* must be brought to the Will of his LORD, and *his Nature* conformed to the *divine Nature*, in order to his dwelling in the blissful Presence of GOD.

An unrenewed Mind is no way suitable either to the *Company*, the *Employments*, or the *Entertainments* of Heaven.

The *Company* of those that inhabit the World above, must needs be disagreeable, to an unholy Soul. For, since GOD himself is so, (as we have just been arguing) all they that are conformed to him, and whose Felicity consists in the enjoy-

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enjoyment of him, must consequently be disagreeable too. JESUS CHRIST is the *express Image* of the Father, in Holiness, as well as other Perfections; and as it was his Character on Earth, 'tis his Glory in Heaven, to be *separate* from Sinners. Holy *Angels* even in their appearance to *good Men*, here below, have fill'd 'em with confusion and dread; and how then, shall the whole Host of Heaven, in all their Splendour and Purity, be endured by sinful Men? The *Spirits of Just Men* that are perfected above, are such as the Sinner hated, scorn'd, persecuted, or liv'd in a constant dislike to, in this World; and can they then be happy together in another World, when the Difference between 'em is greatned, by the *consummate* Holiness of the one, and the *increased* Prejudices of the other? Their *dying* in a State of Enmity, has made that Enmity an *unalterable* thing. Lay all this together, and if an unholy Person would not find one Companion like himself in Heaven, think, what Pleasure he could have in the Society of the Blessed, supposing it were possible for him to get among them.

Again; the *Employments* of Heaven, would not suit the Temper and Inclinations of such a one, any more than the

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Company. Contemplation, of the Things of God, and Religion, is what he has never inur'd himself to; his Temper has been too much set against *Serious Consideration*, ever to take pleasure in such an Exercise. And the *Services* of *Angels*, who are always fulfilling the Pleasure of their LORD, would go quite against the grain of the Sinner's Inclinations; who has been us'd to seek *his own Pleasure*, and to consult *his own Will*, in all his Actions. Instead of praying, that *the Will* of GOD might be *done on Earth as it is in Heaven*, he would wish the quite contrary; that there might be *no other* doing of the Will of GOD in *Heaven*, than what he had been us'd to *here on Earth*; that is, not to regard it at all. Yea, farther; the very *Praises* and *Triumphs* of Heaven, would be unsuitable to an unrenewed Mind. Such a one could by no means bear a part in that solemn Acclamation, *Holy, Holy, Holy LORD GOD Almighty*; since he had no admiring Thoughts of God's Holiness. Nor could He ever joyn in that *Song of the Lamb*, Glory to him that hath loved us and washed us from our Sins in his own Blood, so long as he remain'd un sanctified and unrenewed. Such *Employments*

as

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as these, could afford no pleasure to a wicked Man.

Hence it necessarily follows, that the *Entertainments* and *Joys* of Heaven, would by no means answer the wishes and desires of an Unregenerate Soul, tho' plac'd in the midst of them. The substantial Happiness of the Heavenly Inhabitants, consists in the *Knowledge*, and *Love* of GOD: But I need not say more to prove, that an unrenewed Soul is incapable of this: I shall only add, that by this *incapacity*, such a one must needs suffer the Eternal Loss of all those Joys, which arise from a *beholding* the unveiled Glories of the Deity; and also of all those, which are wrapt up, in that high satisfaction that results from the *Loving*, and *knowing* we are *belov'd*, by the greatest and best Being in the Universe. At the same time, the Unholy Soul is a perfect Stranger to all those *Transports*, that are owing to a review of the *Methods* of *Converting Grace*; and can taste nothing of the Bliss, that springs from a *sacred indissoluble Friendship* with *Holy Intelligent Spirits*. And, upon the Reasons already alledg'd, the same might be said of every other Joy of Heaven.

But

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But now, let me engage you seriously to attend, to the Conclusion of the whole Matter: And there is one Truth, which I apprehend will appear with great Evidence, after what has been said; namely, *that a great deal more, is necessary, than is commonly imagined, to reconcile you to the Heaven and Happiness of Christians.* There is not only a Difficulty, in bringing Men to the Gospel-Terms, of obtaining Happiness; but even in reconciling them, to the Happiness it self. The Christian's Heaven is not a *Mahomet's Paradise*, a Place of sensual Delights and Enjoyments; but it is a *Spiritual Felicity*, and such only as can be enjoy'd by pure Intellectual Beings.

That Man, therefore, talks of he knows not what, that can talk of going to Heaven, whilst his Business, or Pleasures, or Possessions here, engross his Thoughts and Affections. Thou must have Relishes, of a very different nature from those of the Sensualist and the Worldling, before thou canst be happy with God; and the Glorified *Spirits* above.

If then, thou hast ever made it thy wish *to die the Death of the Righteous*; remember, that now thou art told, thou must in thy life-time *become Righteous*, by being thus *renewed and Born again*,

or

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or *that wish* will avail thee nothing. But whether thou art convinced of this or not, I must, for the present, cease arguing with thee, and close this Chapter: Which I shall do, with these two *Inferences* from what has been said.

1. We may infer, *There are but few that shall be Saved.* If such *Spirituality* be necessary to *prepare Men for Heaven*; (without any thing of an *Uncharitable Censorious Temper*;) we may conclude, that very *Few* are *going thither*. Thus much, our LORD told his Disciples in *his Day*; and this, we have abundant reason to apply also to our *own Day*.

Take an account, of those that live in *Atheism and Unbelief*; and that will not acknowledge, or serve GOD at all:

Then compute the number, of those that worship GOD Vainly, in an *Idolatrous Superstitious* manner, and resting in their *Bodily Worship and Devotion*:

After that, look over the crew of common *Profane Swearers*, and *Blasphemers* of the Name of GOD:

Reckon up all those, that live in the *stated Profanation* of the LORD'S DAY:

Add

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Add to these, a List of such as are guilty of Disobedience, to Parents, or Masters, or lawful Governors :

Tell over the numbers of those, that are notorious for Drunkenness, Intemperance, or for Revenge and destructive Passions, whereby they shorten their own Lives, or take away the Lives of others :

Set down all those, that are infamous for Adultery, or Fornication, or other habitual Uncleaness :

Go on to those, that thrive by unjust Means; such as Robbery, Frauds and Oppression :

Survey the crowd of those, that are given up to a Spirit of Lying and Falsehood; and that, even in their solemn Oaths, and bearing Witness in Courts of Judicature :

And once more, find out the restless Tribe of those, that are Vagrants from the Stations in which God had placed them in the World; or that are coveting a great deal of it, and never satisfied with the Allotments of Providence :

And when you have joyned all these together, the Number of such as are renewed and sanctified, will be found comparatively very small. And that you may
not

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not be afraid to set down Any, as Unregenerate, who live in one or more of the afore-mentioned Sins, take that Text in the 1 Ep. *John* iii. 9. along with you in your computation; *Whosoever is Born of GOD, doth not commit Sin*; that is, so as to love it, and live in it. And then, where-ever you see a Person that does habitually commit Sin, and continue in it, you may, without scruple, place him amongst those that are *not Born of GOD*.

But then, besides such as live in notorious Wickedness, you are to take in all such as rest in an *outward Appearance* of Religion, whilst they are Strangers to the *Spiritual Divine Life*, and the *noblest Exercises* of it: Such as take up a Profession, *merely* from their *Education*, or from *External Motives* and *Inducements*; and owe *all* their Restraints from Sin, to these: And such as *have once* made a stricter Profession, but *degenerate* and fall from it: And, after all these are added to the afore-mentioned numbers of Transgressors, how few shall we meet with that are savingly renewed?

In your computations of this kind, you are directed by that of our Saviour in the vii. of *Matth.* the *latter end*: *Not every one that saith LORD, LORD, &c.*

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The Design of all this, is, not to discourage Mens attempts; but to put 'em upon contending, with the greater earnestness; and shewing a more ardent desire, of being found among the *Few that shall be saved*. We must not only seek, but strive, to enter in at the strait gate; and that for this very Reason, *because many shall seek to enter in, (by an outward profession, or some faint Endeavours,) that shall not be able,* Luke xiii. 21.

2. From what has been said, we should learn to pity those, that are heated with a *mistaken Zeal in the lesser Points of Religion, whilst this greatest and weightiest Doctrine of Christianity is neglected*. Never was there more reason, for the exercise of such a Compassion, than in the present Age; when *Party Zeal* is rais'd to such a Height, and *true Piety* sunk so low. Are there not many, who would now be thought the only *Prophets of the LORD*, that lay more stress, upon outward Forms and Ceremonies, than upon Faith and Repentance? and make more to depend upon their *own* way of Administring *Baptism*, and the *LORD's Supper*, than upon those *Qualifications* without which NO Administration of these Sacraments can be available? Nay, are there not those, who have laid the whole

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whole stress, of our acceptance with GOD, upon a *Point of Civil Government*? As if it was of more importance, to embrace a Set of notions of that kind, than to observe such a Doctrine as this I am upon, which our SAVIOUR thought fit to prefer to all others.

What *Political* and *State-Orations*, have of late been the weekly Entertainment of our most *Solemn Assemblies*? yea, what trifling and *Childish Harangues*, have some of the *greatest Audiences* in this *City*, and *Nation*, been amus'd with? *Conversion*, and *Sanctification*, have been slighted; and Contempt thrown upon *those*, who were most in earnest, in recommending these things. By some, they have not been *believed*, nor by others *understood*, and by very few *insisted on*, as they ought to be. And shall we not Pity those, who are going on confidently in an Opinion of themselves, upon some *outward Advantages*; when, at the same time, they are Strangers to the *true* and *only* way to Heaven? Alas Man! thy crying up the *Church*, and being of this or the other *Party* in it, will not stand thee in stead at the Bar of GOD, if thou knowest not what it is to be *Born again*.

Thou

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Thou mayst despise this way of preaching, and writing, if thou pleasest; only know this, — that in so doing thou doest not despise *Man*, but *G O D*. All the *Texts* I have quoted, must be blotted out of the *Bible*, before thou canst justify such Contempt. Thou must find out some *other Heaven*, instead of that I have been describing; and take up some *other Name*, instead of that of a *Christian*; before thou canst set aside the Doctrine of *Regeneration*.

So that every Wise and Good Man, may well lay it to heart, that a Work of this nature is so much at a stand. And whatever others do, let You, and I, make it our constant Request to *G O D*, — that He would *revive his Work in the midst of the Years*.



C H A P. III.

The Means of Attaining the new Birth.

HAVING shew'd, wherein the being *Born again* does consist; as also the *Necessity* of it, if we would see the *Kingdom of GOD*; (that is, if we would be either *real Christians* in this World, or *glorified Spirits* in another;) I would now suppose the Language, of some Convinced Sinner, to be such as this:

“ O tell me, what Course I shall take
 “ to get out of my Sinful State, and to get
 “ an Interest in the Renewing Sanctify-
 “ ing Grace of GOD: *what shall I do to*
 “ *be Saved?* and in order to that, what
 “ shall I do that I may be *Born again?* ”

If this be the unfeigned Disposition of your Mind, 'tis one great step towards a saving Change. It includes in it, a sense of your being in a *Lost and miserable* Condition, whilst in a *State of Sin*: And at the same time, a most hearty acknowledgment that the *Gain of the whole World*, and the fullest enjoyment of sensible things, which are vain and perishing, can never make an amends for the *Loss of your Souls*. It includes farther,

ther, something of a *desire* toward GOD and *Heaven*, and *Spiritual* things; that you cannot be easie, under the thought of being *for ever* rejected, and cast off by Almighty GOD: nay, that you are convinced, there is more real satisfaction, in the ways of Religion, *at present*, than in those of Sin. But yet, how to have your Hearts so changed, and renewed, as to get *out* of the *State* you are in; and to get rid of your *sinful* Inclinations to *sensible Objects*; and to serve GOD, and walk in his *ways*, as you *desire* to do; this fills your Breasts with the greatest anxiety, and employs your Thoughts in restless Contrivances and Concern.

If any should cast their Eyes upon this Passage, who are not got so far as I here suppose the Reader to be; let 'em seriously consider what has been said in the *foregoing Chapter*, and I am persuaded nothing more will be needful to produce such a Temper of Mind.

But where this is truly the Case, I think the *following Directions* may be sufficient to bring such a Person into a safe and renewed State. Only, here, I must bespeak the Reader's *fullest and strongest Resolution* to comply with what is suggested, under every Particular that shall be laid before him:
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It is not the observing of *one*, but *all*, the *Directions* I am going to mention, that must be endeavour'd after; I mean, so far as they appear proper and necessary to secure this great End, your being *Born again*. To begin, then, with that which is most easie;

I. Be very careful, and constant, in attending upon the Preaching of GOD's Word. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word

Rom. x. 17.

of GOD. He has appointed, a *standing Ministry*, for this very End; that the Truths and Duties of Religion, may be so *explain'd*, and *enforc'd*, as to render them impressiv, and effectual to change and rule the *Hearts of Men*. And where GOD is pleas'd, by inward Grace, to concur with the outward Dispensation of his Word, even *that* preaching which may seem very unlikely to produce such an effect as the *new Birth*, shall yet become the *Power of GOD unto Salvation*. Rom. i. 16.

You may, perhaps, be ready now to wish, that GOD would send an *Angel* from *Heaven*; or as the *Rich Man* requested in the *Parable*, that he would send *one* immediately from the *Dead*, to inform

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inform your Minds; and to do some great, and miraculous thing for you. But when you are only to look for Help from those, of the *same Infirmities and Passions* with your selves, you may think that very little is like to be done for you.

Let me, therefore, argue this Matter briefly with you: What could an Angel, or one from the Dead, *say* more, than is said in the *Gospel*? or what could He *do* more, to prove the Truth of what He said, than has been done by CHRIST and his *Apostles*? or what way could He find, to the Hearts and Consciences of Men, that should give Him a greater Power and Influence over them, than such Appearances of GOD and Angels have formerly had? If an Angel was to appear but once, it would by no means equal the Force, of the *daily* Pleadings and Instructions of GOD's *Ministers*: And if an *Angel* was to *live* amongst us, he would, in time, we have reason to believe, meet with no better Treatment than the LORD of *Angels* did. There is a great deal of difference, between *startling* or terrifying the Mind, and working a thorough *Change* in it: Apparitions from the other World, might *alarm* us, for a *while*; but the Operation of Almighty Grace, by and with the Gospel,

Gospel, is only able to *change* and new mould the *Heart*. And God has given us *this Treasure in Earthen Vessels*, that the *Excellency of the Power* might appear to be of him, and not of us, 2 Cor. iv. 7.

Attend, therefore, upon the preaching of the Gospel, as believing it to be the Ordinance of GOD: and let not the *Means* be thought insufficient to gain their *End*, when under the *Direction*, and accompany'd with the *Blessing*, of *Him* that can do all things. You are not, indeed, to look for any thing from *us*, as though by our own Power or Skill we could bring you to GOD: But, your Expectation being once fix'd on God, you cannot look for too much, from *Him*.

Yet here it must be added, that next to your having a Hope thus fix'd on GOD; it is your Wisdom, and your Duty, to chuse that *Ministry* stately to attend upon, which you find most *instructive* and intelligible, most *serious* and affecting; And to be thankful to GOD, if you meet with Men whose *Gifts*, and *manner* of dispensing the Gospel, become suitable to you.

And, when at any time you find yourselves under *Convictions*, there ought to be the utmost Concern that this *Grace of GOD* be not *receiv'd in vain*; or in other

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Words,

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Words, that such Convictions be not *lost* : For by stifling or turning away from them, the most *agreeable* and *useful* Ministry will cease to be of any *real* Benefit and Service to you : And by excusing, from time to time, your *regard* to the Impressions which are made on your Minds, the most *important* things will lose their *Force* ; and the most *earnest* Solicitations, will become, but as an *uncertain, unheeded* Sound.

Moreover, you should be very careful not to *absent* your selves *wilfully*, or for *slight* and trivial *Reasons*, from the Place of *publick Worship*. What knowest thou, but that very Sermon, which thou turnedst away from, might have done more for thee, than all that ever thou heard'st in thy Life? What knowest thou, but that very time, G O D might have given some secret and particular Instructions to the Preacher, to deliver those things that should have reach'd and chang'd thy Heart? When through a sluggish, or worldly, or vain and trifling Temper, thou wast kept from the Assembly of God's People.

There is one Caution, however, that 'tis proper to subjoin here; namely, not to look for a Change so sudden and *miraculous*,

raculous, as to have the *whole* Work done upon your Souls by *one* Sermon. Sometimes indeed it has been so, that a Man has *come* into a Place of Worship, an *Enemy* to all that is Good, and has *gone away* thoroughly resolved to become a *new Man*: Almighty Grace has made the Change in an *instant*; but this is not to be usually expected. And I think, it is much more desirable, that our Light should encrease *gradually*; and so the Change be carried on, by *slower* Steps and Degrees; than, that it should be brought about with such *Violence*, as in some extraordinary Cases it has been. One Point, may more easily be gain'd upon us, by one Sermon; and another, by another Sermon; and a regular Attention to a *Course* of these, may do that for us, which *one* Discourse could not so well have done. So that if you should not find your selves wrought upon, in that extraordinary manner, which has been the Case of some; yet, if there be a gradual Light and Change, by a regular continued Attention to the Dispensation of God's Word, you may safely conclude your selves to be *born again* thereby. The Renovation of *some*, is like opening the Shutters of a Window, at Noon Day; and letting in, a *full Light* into a Room, at *once*. The re-
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newing of *others*, is like the breaking in of the Morning's Light, into a Room which has all its Windows open to receive it: It appears very dim at first, but increases gradually, till at last, the Room is bright'ned and irradiated with the Noon Day's Sun.

So that, upon the whole, you see what reason there is, for this Advice, and what Regard, ought to be had to it; To be constant, and diligent, in attending upon the *preaching* of God's *Word*, in order to your being *renewed and born again*.

II. *There must be some time allow'd, and set apart, for Retirement, and serious Thoughtfulness.* If the Heart be affected, and put upon any good Purposes and Resolutions, in the time of *publick Worship*; you must endeavour, when that is *over*, to cherish such Impressions; and to put, in Execution, your good Intentions: Let it be your Care, as fast as you can, to get into some *secret Place*; where you may be out of the reach of every thing that would divert, or distract you: And then, putting your selves into the best Posture for serious Thoughtfulness that you are able, let those things that have engaged your *Attention* in *publick*, be call'd to mind, and more distinctly applied

plied to your *own State* and Condition, in *private*.

Whilst there is a shunning of Retirement, and Consideration, the strongest Convictions will not be able to make any *real* and *lasting* Change, either in your Tempers, or your Lives. Serious Thoughtfulness is necessary, to give every Conviction its proper Force: By this, we shall be led to contrive Matters so, as that we may afterward suit our Conversation, and Behaviour, to the Impressions that are made upon us. Thus much, we are plainly taught, from that known Passage of the *Psalmist*; *I thought on my Ways, and turned my Feet* Psal. cxix. 59.
unto thy Testimonies: He thought, and then he turn'd: Yea, his thinking closely, and seriously, engag'd him *immediately* to set about his Duty; *I made haste,* verse 60.
and delayed not, to keep thy Commandments.

Sometimes, *afflictive Providences* may be very serviceable, to promote a thoughtful and retired Disposition of Mind: And *this* kind of Thoughtfulness, may be still as effectual, if follow'd and improv'd, to produce a thorough Change, as *that*, which proceeds from a being affected in *bearing* the *Word* of *G O D*. It is by Afflictions, and Distresses, only, that some

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Men are brought to themselves: And till a gay romantick Fancy, is corrected; and the Mind is brought to a just way of thinking, both on its own State, and the nature of all sensible Enjoyments; there will be no Inclination, to return to God, or to live the Life of a *real Christian*. Hence it is that the *Prodigal* in the *Parable*, is represented—as first coming to himself, — and then returning to his Father: After a distracted, and thoughtless Life, his *Husks* brought him to think, of his *Folly*, and his *miserable* abandon'd State, together with the Plenty and the Comforts of his *Father's House*: And by a due Consideration of these, he was soon put into a Method, that prov'd successful to bring about his Recovery.

But, whatever be the means of calling in our Thoughts, from their sinful Vagary's, and from the pursuit of lying Vanities; if they are not fix'd closely, upon the leading and most important *Truths of Religion*, they will never work a saving Change in us. There is a great deal of difference, betwixt — a Person's becoming *thoughtful* or *pensive* about his *Affairs*, in this World, — and a *religious Consideration* of his State and *Condition*, in the World to which, at Death, he must be remov'd. Therefore, the Scripture sums up *all other*
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Considerations, in this *one*; meditating on the *End of Life*: O *that they were wise! that they understood this! that they would consider their latter end.* That is, consider so, as to be affected with the *certainty* of our Death; not only as it is appointed unto Men in general, but to my self in particular, *once to die.* And then also to consider the *uncertainty* of the *Time*, when Death shall overtake us; not knowing, but we may be in Eternity, every Moment. We must think, farther, of the *awful Consequences* of Death: That *we must immediately appear before the Judgment Seat of CHRIST, to receive according to what we have done in the Body, whether good or bad,* 2 Cor. v. 10.

They that are duly affected, with such Thoughts as *these*, will soon be carried to a multitude of *others*, which have a plain and very close *Connexion* with them. Thus, to consider our *latter End*, will lead us to think of the *Preparation* that is necessary, to our Safety and Comfort, at such a time. This will put you upon considering, your *own ways*, and how much you have done to *destroy* your selves: It will also lead you to think, on God's *ways* toward you, and how much he has done to *save* you. This will direct your Thoughts to a REDEEMER,

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and will open to you the Treasures of mercy in our LORD JESUS CHRIST; *who tho' he was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, and became a Sacrifice too, that he might bring you to GOD. In short, to think seriously of such a Change as Death, will make Men solicitous, first to have such a Change as the new Birth pass upon them; since, without this, they die, not only for a time, but for ever. And when once such a Concern as this, is thoroughly excited, there is a great deal done toward your being Born again.*

III. *You must frequently and diligently Read the Holy Scriptures, and other divine Writings that may instruct you in the nature of Conversion and true Piety. In the first and chief place, your Bibles should be search'd and study'd by you: Here it is, that we have the discoveries, of Eternal Life and Death; with the means of escaping the Wrath, and obtaining the Joys, to come: Here, all the Treasures of saving Wisdom and Knowledge lie: And from hence it is, that all other Writers of sacred things, derive their best Thoughts, and Rules of Conduct, in every Treatise of a Religious nature.*

Those that read the Scriptures, in order to their *Conversion*, should especially

ally take care, to begin with what is plain and obvious; and what, more immediately relates, to their *own* Case, in their Renovation and turning to God. Such as the account of the *Returning Prodigal*, in the xvth of *St. Luke*. *St. Paul's* narrative of his own Conversion, in the xxvith of the *Acts of the Apostles*. That *Sermon*, that prov'd the means of Converting three Thousand, in the ii^d. Chap. of the same Book. Such Descriptions of a saving Change, as that, in the ivth *Ephes.* from the 17th to the end, going on in the vth Chap. also to the xviith Verse. And then as an Excitement to shew the greater regard to these, it will be proper to read such Chapters as the xith to the *Hebrews*; which is a noble List of Great and Good Men, that have despised and conquered the World, and the sensitive nature, by their believing regards to Invisible and Eternal things: And so to turn to the Examples of *present Judgements*, on the Wicked and finally Impenitent: As also, to the most affecting representations of the *Future Punishments* and Rewards of Men, in *Heaven*, or *Hell*: These, I say, and such like places of Scripture, ought first to be carefully read and understood, by those that are seeking after the *new Birth*. The *Psalms*, and the

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devotional parts of Scripture, there should be an intimate acquaintance with.

But now, as there are *Treatises* that collect and *lay together*, the several passages of *Scripture* which relate to one and the same thing; so it is adviseable, that some of *these* Writings should be consulted, as well as the Sacred Oracles. And I doubt not, but such *Treatises* as have been publish'd upon *Conversion*, *Repentance*, *Regeneration*, and holy *Resolution*; in a plain Method, and in a modern Stile, and with a serious Spirit; have frequently been bless'd, to the producing of that Change I am here directing to, as well as the *Bible* it self.

In all your Reading, you should make it your care, to form very *distinct* and *clear Notions* of what you read: putting such a Question, often to your selves, as that of *Philip* to the *Ethiopian*; *understandest thou what thou readest*? And, when you are considering what it is to be *Born again*, you should endeavour to inform your self of the Nature and Consequences of Man's first *Apostacy* from his Maker; that you may conceive the more truly, and affectingly, of his being *renew'd*, and *recover'd* out of such a Condition, by the *Gospel*. If we are not acquainted with our *natural State*,

as it is a State both of *Sin* and *Misery*, we shall never *strive* (as we ought) to get out of it.

Nor are we qualify'd to obtain Mercy, at the hands of a REDEEMER. We are told, that CHRIST *came to seek and to save that which was lost*: Not all that were so; for then, none must be condemned or cast off: But such, as have a deep and *thoro' sense*, that, they are lost, without a SAVIOUR; and, accordingly are brought, to *his Terms*, of being Saved.

It is, therefore, farther requisite; that you should have very distinct conceptions, of what is done on *his* part, and what is to be done on *yours*. CHRIST has done, and will do, all the Work of a SAVIOUR; but he has not done, and he will not, yea, he cannot, do the work of a Sinner: He died for us, 'tis true; but He never undertook to *Repent*, and *Believe*, or become a *new Creature*, for any Man: Nor did he purchase, Eternal Life and Salvation for any, *without these*: Nor has he purchased the *Spirit*, to work in us any way *unsuitably*, to our *reasonable* Natures and Capacities.

I might instance in some other things, had I not said so much to explain the Doctrine of the *new Birth* already: But I shall refer the Reader to the *first Chapter*

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of this Treatise, if he yet stands in need of Information, in this Matter; and I beg that he would read it with a due Care and Attention.

For this I must repeat, that 'till you do in some measure understand these things, you ought to give very diligent attendance to *reading the Scriptures, and other Books*, that may help you to think aright, both of your *Condition*, and your *Duty*.

IV. *You should hereupon endeavour to affect your Souls, with a sense, of the Corruption of your Nature, and the many Sins that you have actually committed in your Lives.*

We find in our selves, very strong Inclinations to many things, which, even *natural Conscience* tells us, ought *not to be done*; and very great reluctancy, and aversion to other things, that *ought to be done* by us. We may observe, a deal of confusion and inconsistency in our *Thoughts*, a perverseness and meanness in our *Wills* and *Tempers*; and a prevailing sensuality in our *Passions* and *Affections*, as also frequent *jarrings* and *contentions* amongst these: From all which, you cannot but conclude, your *Nature* is very much disorder'd: And therefore should first lament, with the *Psalmist*, that you were *shapen in Iniquity*,

quity, and conceived in Sin. O' look to *Paradise*, and to a State of Innocence; consider, how wretchedly Humane Nature is now chang'd, and degenerate from what it once was: Surely it will put some such Lamentation, as that of the *Prophet*, into your Mouths; *The Crown is fall'n from our Head, we unto us that we have sinned.*

But then, we must not satisfy our selves, in bewailing our natural depravity, only; for, that is to charge all our Crimes, upon our Ancestors: We must, farther, take an account of our many *Actual Transgressions*; and so remember our own evil ways, and our doings that have not been good, Ezek. xx xvi. 31.
as to loath our selves, in our own sight, for our Iniquities, and for our Abominations.

Here, I would advise you to sit down, and think over the Sins of *Childhood*, and *Youth*, which you are able to call to mind. And take as distinct an account, as you can, of your Miscarriages when at *Home* with your Parents; and afterwards, when you were sent out for Business, or Education, into the World.

Think of the several Places you have liv'd in, and what your Sins have been, in each of these.

If you are so far advanced in the World,

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World, as to have Families of your own, think of your Faults in a *Relative Capacity*: What Sins you have been guilty of against *Wife*, or *Husband*, against *Children*, or *Servants*.

And so, also, think of your Sins against those, you may have dealt with in a way of *Trade*; or convers'd with in a way of *Friendship*; or those that you should have help'd in a way of *Charity*.

Take an account of the Sins of your *Tempers*, and *Constitutions*.

Then mark down those, that arise from your *outward Circumstances*, and *Condition*.

Especially take care to find out that, which is, most strictly speaking, your *own Iniquity*; (the Sin to which you have been most addicted;) and where, in any Instance, this has broke out in such a manner as to leave uneasie impressions upon your Minds, be sure to take an account of all such Acts of Wickedness.

Let the *Ten Commandments* be set before you, when you are making this Inquisition: And set down the several Sins which you apprehend you have been guilty of, in *doing what is forbid*, or *neglecting what is required*, under each Command.

After this, think of the times when you *sifted Convictions*; and turn'd a-
way

way from the offers of Grace, and calls to Repentance in the Gospel. That you have not only *Sinned*, but been *Impenitent* too.

Think of your *Sins* against a REDEEMER: That you have been willing to live, so long, in *Ignorance* of his Undertaking: Or, that you have *thought too slightly, and meanly*, of his Sufferings, and Sacrifice; Or, that you have *turn'd his Grace into wantonness*; and because Grace has abounded, therefore you have abounded the more in Sin.

Think of the *despite* you have done to the Holy SPIRIT: *Resisting* his *Motions*, when you have been in Publick Ordinances; and *putting by*, or excusing your selves from a compliance with, his more secret Suggestions.

And then at the end of all, reckon up the several *Aggravations* of your Sins: That is, set down, as far as you can remember,
 The Mercies and Deliverances,
 The Judgments and Afflictions,
 The Counsels and good Advice,
 The Reproofs and Censures,
 The Light and Knowledge,
 The Vows and Promises,

} you have
 Sinn'd
 against.

With *whatever else* you can think of, that will make your Sins appear the *more grievous* to you,

In

In the whole of this *search* after Sin, you must resolve,—that no *one* Transgression shall be overlook'd, thro' a *wilful concealment*, or a *negligent search*, or a *vain excuse*: But lay thy self as open, as possible, before GOD; and take pains even to find out, thy forgotten, and lesser Iniquities; and be sure not to admit a thought of any thing, at such a time, that would cover thy Guilt.

Now, spread the black Catalogue before thine Eyes; And see what thou canst do, to excite all manner of Resentments against thy Sins, and against thy self, because of them.

Think of every thing that may excite thy *shame*. The *folly* of thy Actions, the *baseness* and *meanness* of them; the *reproach* which they *deserve*, from the *World*; but especially, their *final exposing* of thee, before Angels and Men, at the last Day. Possibly this may *turn thy Heart* against, and provoke thine *Abhorrence* of, those Actions that thus appear *shameful* to thee.

Again; try farther what thou canst do to alarm thy *Fears*. See if the apprehension of some *dreadful Calamity* overtaking thee, whilst thou art going on in a sinful Course, will not make thee cry out in such Language as that of the
Psalmist,

Psalmist, My flesh trembles for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy Judgments. O! see if the Terrors of God's Law and Justice, and especially those of the last Judgment, be not sufficient to persuade thee to Repentance.

Farther; let every thing that may work upon thy *Sorrow*, and *Grief*, be attended to. The *Ingratitude* thou hast been guilty of, to the greatest and best of Benefactors; thy *Forfeiture* of the most valuable Privileges, and Blessings; the many *mischiefs* thou hast, now, brought upon thy self; and the unspeakable *Torments*, that Sin *hereafter* exposes thee to, which it is impossible for thee to escape if thou goest on in it: And then say, if these things be not enough, to pierce and grieve the most dull and unimpressive Heart, that has once learnt to *realize* what it thinks of.

Once more; let every thing that can stir up thy *hatred*, and *aversion*, be called to mind. And think, if thou canst, of *any thing* in the World that deserves to be hated more, than *Sin*. The most *loathsome Creatures* have nothing in them, so odious, as *Sin*; nor the most *ungrateful*, and *abominable Actions* of Men toward one another, any thing so frightful, as the *Sinning* against God.

If,

If, by this means, thy Heart is set against thy evil ways; then, the Motions of Grace, and of a renewing SPIRIT, will be welcome; and then may'st thou reasonably, and comfortably, expect them. And so, that *shame*, and *fear*, and *sorrow* and *hatred*, which at first might be no more than the exercise of so many *natural Passions*; shall be sublim'd, by the operation of the Holy SPIRIT, into that saving Grace of a Christian, *Repentance unto Life never to be repented of*.

V. Another of the prescribed means of Regeneration, is, *humble and fervent Prayer*. I know it is said, that
PROV. xv. 8. *the Sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord*: And I have heard it therefore argued, by some, that such as are in an unregenerate State are not to be put upon Prayer, or any Religious Exercise; because, whilst in such a State, nothing that is done by them can be acceptable or pleasing to G O D. But this kind of talk is plainly owing, to a *Criminal neglect* of some parts of *Scripture*, which occasions the *wronging* and *misinterpreting* of others. If he that is wicked, intends to *continue* in his wickedness; without doubt, *his Prayer* must be an *Abomination*: As it is a most insolent

lent Attempt to impose upon an *Omniscient, Almighty God*: But if the wicked Man, under a serious sense of the evil of his ways, and with such kind of reflections on himself and his Condition as those I have just mention'd, seeks to God for Grace to renew and change his Heart and Life, such Prayer is far from being offensive to the great *Father of Mercies*.

St. Peter does expressly require *Simon Magus*, as ill a Man as he was, and even whilst he was utterly estranged to the *Grace and Spirit of the Gospel*, to *pray to God*; and that upon a mere probability, that the *thought of his heart might be forgiven him*. From whence I think there is abundant reason to conclude, that if a Man's *own Conscience* should condemn him; yea, if an *Apostle*, or Messenger sent immediately from God, should tell him he is in the *Bondage of Sin and Iniquity*; yet, it is his Duty, to *pray for pardoning renewing Grace*.

And surely you have encouragement enough, to plead with God, when you find it expressly said that *He gives the Holy Spirit to them*

Luke xi. 13.

that ask it: By which, our Saviour tells us a little after our *Text*, we are *born again*. And elsewhere, the Language of
God,

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GOD, to a sinful People, was;—*Ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you: And ye shall seek me and find me, when you shall search for me with all your heart;* Jerem. xxix. 12, 13.

You say, that you are not able to do any thing of your self; and that it is the Grace of GOD, alone, that must renew and save you. Can you not express your self thus in Prayer to GOD, as well as talk in such a manner to your Fellow-Creatures? Go then, and tell a gracious GOD, how helpless you are; and how insufficient to every good work. If you can do no more, yet so far surely you may go, to make such Complaints in secret, as well as in Company; and to speak to Him, who sees in secret, as you would do to your Companions. Tell GOD therefore, instead of telling them, that you are convinced nothing but his Almighty Grace can renew and sanctify you: And that you therefore come to beg this Grace of him: And withal be sure to urge his own Promises, in, and thro' our LORD JESUS CHRIST: And I am persuaded, you will have no reason to complain, of the *unsuccessfulness of such a Course as this.*

There is a very moving Representation, of such a Frame and Temper of Mind, as
that.

that I would endeavour to work in you by thus sending you to your Knees, in a *Discourse of Mr. N. Taylor, concerning Faith in CHRIST*. Which, with some little Alterations and Additions, I shall here recommend to you; as what may direct your Thoughts and assist your Expressions, when first, under discouraging Apprehensions of your selves, you look to a REDEEMER to help and save you.

“ My *Sins* are many, and my *Danger*
 “ is great, and my *Fears* are proportiona-
 “ ble to *both*: What will become of me
 “ to *all Eternity*, GOD only knows —
 “ There is indeed Salvation for *lost Sin-*
 “ *ners*, thro’ the *Blood* of a *crucify’d JE-*
 “ *sus*; but I am terribly afraid I shall
 “ never get an *Interest* in it. ——— Many
 “ *Discouragements* break in, like Wave
 “ after Wave, on my distressed *Soul*;
 “ and I have scarce *Faith*, and *Hope* e-
 “ nough, to put up a *Prayer* to GOD: And
 yet, I cannot forbear crying, *Lord be mer-*
ciful to me a Sinner! If such short, but
 ardent Breathings as these, may obtain
 the gracious Regards of my great LORD,
 I shall be happy. If these will *not* a-
 vail, what shall a poor Creature do, that
 knows not how to order his Words, or
 how

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how to govern his Thoughts, or to perform any thing that is really good! —
O how am I now toss'd in my own Spirit — “ I am told there is a safe and
“ desirable *Harbour* before me ; but
“ Lord! at how great a distance am I
“ from it : It is not long since I *had a-*
“ *ny thought about* it, and I fear I shall
“ never *reach* it, I see the Waves swell
“ and prevail so much before me: LORD
save me, or I perish! — “ Well, I must
“ and will try, what *rich, sovereign, free*
“ *Grace* will do for me — If I am the
“ *wilest* Sinner that ever was, then
“ CHRIST had never yet so fair an Op-
“ portunity, of shewing his *tender Love,*
“ his *infinite Power,* his *unshaken Faith-*
“ *fulness,* and the *value and efficacy* of his
“ *Blood,* in all their Beauty and Glory,
“ as now he has. What, tho' I am an
“ *obscure* Person, and should never have
“ an Opportunity to *publish* it on Earth;
“ yet it will not die as a *Secret in my Bo-*
“ *som:* The happy Tydings will *run*
“ *through* the Heavens; and the *blessed*
“ *Inhabitants* above, will wonder at such
“ exceeding Grace, overflowing to me :
“ Eternal *Hallelujahs* will be sung, to the
“ LAMB of GOD, on my account. I
“ will, therefore, cast my self into the
“ *Arms* of infinite Mercy — But, that's
“ too

“ too proud and forward an Expression;
 “ I would rather say, I’ll throw my self
 “ at his *Feet*: If he spurn me away, I
 “ can but die *then*, and die I must if I
 “ *don’t apply* to him. Who knows, but
 “ he may stretch out the *Scepter* of his
 “ *Grace*, and then I shall live. —How-
 “ ever, *live or die*, I’ll betake my self to
 “ him; if ever Help comes, I know it
 “ must come *this way*. And as I am re-
 “ solved to *pray*, so I will *wait* the Issue
 “ of my Prayers; and see how it may
 “ please, the most compassionate *Lover of*
 “ *Souls*, to deal with Mine.

VI. You may now venture, to make a
solemn Dedication of your selves to GOD,
through CHRIST JESUS, as those that are
desirous to be his in an everlasting Covenant.
 When you have been *entreating the Fa-*
vour of GOD, with your whole
Hearts; and pleading the *Me-*
rits and Mediation of his Son, in whom he
 has declar’d himself to be *E-*
ver well pleased; you may
 then proceed, to a *Surrender*
 of your Souls into his Hands; and may en-
 gage your selves, by *particular Vows*, and
Promises, to be the LORD’S.

Psal. cxix. 58.

Matth. iii. 17.
and xvii. 5.

This you must take Care to do with
 the greatest *Seriousness* and *Solemnity*:
 Let

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Let it be done, in a way that may most thoroughly impress, and engage, your *own Hearts*; and you may depend upon it, that such, as are thus brought to give up themselves to God, *He will in no wise cast off*. And 'tis certainly fit, you should act in this Case, as Men are us'd to do, in other Affairs of Importance; that is, not only in *Word*, but in *Writing*, this Covenant Dedication of your selves should be made. You should *draw up a Summary*, of what you engage both to *Be*, and to *Do*; and then *sign* it with your own *Hand*, as a Testimony of your acting with the utmost *Consideration, Heartiness, and Resolution* in this matter.

I am far from being singular, in *giving* such *Advice*, as this: And I am not the only Person, that has reason to be thankful to God, for an *early complying* with it. Mr. Gouge, Mr. Allen, and others of our most serious Writers on the Subjects of *Conversion and Regeneration*, have insisted on such a Method, as the most proper way of *entring* upon a religious Life. And when Men are once brought to *apply* their Thoughts, to the things of God, and the Concerns of their Souls, as they *ought* to do; they will not call it a *Task*, or a count it an *unnecessary Burden*, to be obliged to this. When *Isaiab* is foretel-
ling

ling the *Conversion*, of those that should live in *after-times*, and of those that were *Aliens* to the *Covenant of Promise* made with *Israel*, he represents it thus; that one shall say *I am the LORD's*: and another shall call himself by the Name of *JACOB*: and another shall subscribe, with his Hand, unto the *LORD*.

Isai. xliv. 5.

When, therefore, you have considered well, the *Terms* upon which you are to give up your selves to *GOD*; if you find a *willingness* and *desire* to comply with them, write them out: And then venture, by *subscribing your Hand* to them, to declare your *acceptance* of them, and your *heartly Resolution* to observe them.

And in this first solemn *Dedication* of your selves to *GOD*, in *CHRIST*, I would advise you, to make use of the following Words, or something of the same Import.

O LORD GOD, the Maker of Heaven and Earth! by whose *Word*, and for whose *Glory*, I, and all Creatures were made: I now come to acknowledge Thee, as the Author of my Being; and the Preserver of my Life; and the Giver of every
F thing

thing I enjoy. And, therefore, do now submit my self, to thee, as my rightful Owner, and Sovereign Lord. *Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy Sight, and am not worthy to be called thy Child*; I shall think my self highly honour'd, and very happy, if thou wilt but *receive me* as one of thy *meanest Servants*. I here bring thee a *Creature*, of thine own, that has been *straying* from thee. This *Soul* and *Body*, now prostrate at thy Footstool, I humbly offer unto thee; that thou may'st *go over* thy *Work again*, and *create me anew* after thine own *Image*; and so will I be thy *faithful Servant*, as long as *I live*.

O BLESSED JESUS! if *thou* wilt now take my *Part*, and plead my *Cause* with the FATHER, I am ready to profess my self *thy Disciple*, upon thine own *Terms*; and to *follow thee*, (if my Heart deceive me not,) *whithersoever thou goest*. I do sincerely give up my self to thy *Teaching* and *Instruction*: O give me *Understanding*! that I may *know the Truth* as
it

it is in thee. I do, unfeignedly, consent to thy *Government*; And with a Mind willing to obey thee, I can now say, LORD, *what wilt thou have me to do?* I will ascribe, all the Honour of my Salvation, to thy meritorious *Death*, and powerful *Intercession*: And in these, alone, will I repose my Trust.

And now, if my LORD will undertake, that his *Grace shall be sufficient for me*, there is nothing that I shall think too *difficult to attempt*, or too *much to suffer, for thee.* I do lift my self this Day under thy Banner, as the great *Captain of my Salvation.* Affrighted at my self, to think that I have so long been under the Power and Tyranny of the *Devil*; whom I shall, from this Moment, *resist to the uttermost.* I am persuaded, this *World* is nothing but *Vanity, and vexation of Spirit*; and therefore shall set my self, by thy *Help*, and according to they *Example*, to *conquer* it and bring it into *Subjection.* I have found my *own Heart* corrupt, wicked, and deceitful; and therefore I will no longer pretend

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pretend to manage for my self, but shall rejoyce to *give up every Thought, and Will, and Affection*, intirely to *thee*. I am now desirous to be Thine, so as not to be Another's: Thine, and not the Devil's; Thine, and not the World's; Thine, and not my Own.

To thee, O HOLY SPIRIT! I acknowledge my self *indebted*, for these and all other good Inclinations: And, that I may be enabled to *hold to* my present Purposes; and to *improve* in a *holy, heavenly Disposition* of Mind; I now *cast my self upon thee*, for all that *Direction and Assistance*, which my Circumstances, from time to time, may require. Hence-forward, I shall *yield* my self to thy *Conduct*, and Influence: And shall make it my Care to *attend* to all thy *Motions*, and *Convictions*; both in performing my *Duty*, and abstaining from *Sin*; and so to do those things, that may be most pleasing to thee.

Thus, O FATHER, SON, and SPIRIT! with my whole Heart I desire, *freely and fully*, to *devote my self*
to

to thee : Chusing thee for my *everlasting Portion*, and Promising to serve thee as my *supreme Master* and LORD, whilst I have a Being.

And as a Proof of my *Sincerity*, and of my ardent Desire to *make good* such a Profession, I am willing to bind my self, by *setting my Hand* to all this; that it may be a Witness *for*, or *against* me, as I behave my self *agreeably*, or *disagreeably*, to what I now do.

* * * *

This I would advise you to *read* over and over, before you subscribe it : And if there be any *particular Expressions*, that you cannot so *fully* make your own, as may be necessary to the affixing your *Name*, you will do well to make *such Alterations*, as you think may render it more suitable to your *own Case*. But whenever you *sign* this, or any other Instrument of the like nature, let your Minds be as free, as possible, from all other Affairs; that you may be the more *perfectly engaged* in such a Transaction, and the more *deeply impress'd* by it.

LASTLY, What farther remains, is *only to abide by what you have done, and to try how far you can go, in amending your Lives and Actions.*

'Tis possible, that after the most solemn surrender of your selves to GOD, you may yet for a while *think* you are *neglected* by Him: Nay, your Temptations may be so much the *stronger*, and your Conflicts the greater for a time, that you may *think* you are in a *worse* Condition, than *before* you laid your selves under such Engagements. *We are not ignorant of the Devices of the Devil;* who, when he finds you are like to be *rescued* from his Dominion, will give you all the *Disturbance* and *Trouble* that is in his Power. But this, however, should not occasion any *dislike* of what you have done; or any *distrust* of the Mercy of GOD, to whom you have committed your Souls.

If you think your Prayers, and your Offerings, have not yet gone up with *Acceptance* before your LORD; you must repeat them; and *cry* the *louder*: As the two *blind Men* did, when CHRIST had *passed by them*, JESUS! *thou Son of David, have Mercy on us.* Yea, if you should interpret his Language, towards
you,

you, to be the same with that, to the *Woman of Canaan*; *It is not meet to take the Childrens Bread* Matth. xv. 26. and to cast it to Dogs; yet still, true Humility will enable you, to form a Plea from thence; not to fix a Discouragement in your selves upon it. LORD, I acknowledge my self a vile, unworthy Creature; if I am set amongst the Dogs, it is but where I deserve to be: But let me not meet with worse Treatment than they do, which are allow'd to eat of the Crumbs that fall from their Masters Table. O let down something, from thy self, that may be a Token of thy owning, and accepting me; tho' it should be never so small a Favour, it shall be to me a valued one. But let not my LORD be angry, if I go on to say; That, tho' I am not worthy, with Dogs, to gather the Crumbs that fall from thy Table, yet I will not let thee go, until thou bless me with Childrens Blessings.

Thus, if we not only ask, and seek, but continue to knock; and, with an unwearyed Importunity, solicit for Grace and Mercy; we shall not be finally disappointed. We are most sure, we have to do with one, that is able to save to the uttermost: And it would not be so hard, to be assured of his willingness, to help and

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save us, if it was not one part of our Sin and Misery, in a natural State, to be distrustful and afraid of the great G O D. These Fears and Suspicions (amongst other Disorders,) we are seeking to be *deliver'd from*, in our *Regeneration*; and therefore must not *give way* to 'em, however we may find reason to *complain* of 'em.

But to proceed to the other part of this last Direction; you must *try how far you can go, in amending your Lives and Actions*. Try, tho' you *fall short* of what you attempt: It will make you more sensible of your *own Weakness* and *Insufficiency*: It will shew you *where* all your Help and Strength lyes: And it will make you *more earnest* in imploring Aid and Assistance *from above*.

Try what you can do, to *restrain* your selves from the *Sins*, you have been most apt to commit: Possibly upon exerting your Resolution and Endeavours this way, you may find some Sins *more easily* forsaken and subdued than you could have expected: Possibly you may find, the *Grace* you have been seeking after, has been *given in*, even whilst you were *praying* for it. However, there are some *common Actions*, that, may be alter'd and reform'd, by the help of *common Grace*: And these, you must first begin with. For instance,

instance; he that us'd to spend his LORD's *Days* in the *Fields*, or in *publick Houses*, or in *visiting* his *Friends*; may with the same, perhaps less, *bodily Labour*, go to the *Place* of GOD's Worship, or to *converse* with those that would be *serviceable* to him in the *Matters of Religion*: He that could *lie*, and *swear*, and *curse*, and *prophane* the *Name* of GOD; may, as easily be *silent*, as employ his *Tongue* in such a manner: He that could *defraud*, or *strike*, or *injure* his *Neighbour*, cannot pretend want of *Power* to forbear such *Actions*. Every one must be sensible, upon the first mention of these things, that it requires greater *Power* to *do* them, than to be *still* and *unactive*, and to do nothing at all.

Now, if you can, for the present, go no farther than this; 'tis something very considerable towards the *Reformation* I am speaking of: 'Tis *one half* of the *Work*, to *cease to do evil*; and the *other half*, is, to *learn to* Isai. i. 16, 17.
do well. And if a good GOD observes us striving to please him, in the former respect; we have abundant reason to trust him, as to the latter: That he will *furnish* us, for *every good Work*, and enable us, more and more, to *abound therein*. It is observeable, that when the *Prodigal*

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was yet a great way off, the Father saw him, and ran to meet him: And he has not less Concern for, or Regard to, returning Prodigals now, than he had in former times. He is as ready, to meet, and help, and encourage them, as ever.

So that to close this Head; where serious *Consideration, Prayer, and devoting our selves to God*, is accompany'd with the *best Endeavours* of which we are capable; we may then comfortably expect, and should wait for, the *special Grace* and Assistance of a divine SPIRIT, that may work in us yet more effectually, to our *compleat Sanctification and Salvation.*

In the *Conclusion* of this *Chapter*, let me engage those that are, themselves, in a *safe State*, (if any such should look over this *little Book*,) to *pray* earnestly and with a hearty Concern, for *them* that may now be in the *struggles* of this *new Birth*. Those that cannot help them any *other way*, yet may do it by their *Prayers*. You should therefore intreat for them, that they may not strive, or be under Convictions, *in vain*; but that they may become the *Children of God*, by partaking of his *Nature*, and so being brought into his *Family*.

Every one that is thus added to the
Church

Church of CHRIST, brings so much more of *his Presence* and *Spirit*, into the *Assembly* where he *worships*, as he is hereby possess'd of: Yea, he adds Strength to a REDEEMER'S *Interest* in the World: He adds also to the *Joy* of *Heaven*; and will in a particular manner be a *Joy* and a *Crown* to those, that are any way *instrumental* of bringing him to God.

Let us then be very fervent, in our *Petitions* for such: That the *Wit*, or *Malice*, or *Vices* of those with whom they converse, may not prevent the good Effect of any serious Impressions that have been made on their Souls; nor the *Assaults* and *Suggestions* of the *Devil*, discourage them. And, as many of the *Children* of *religious Parents*, are now become *Deserters* of that which is good; and are taking part, with the profane, and irreligious World; so should we double our Requests to GOD, that he would bring in *others*. And for my own part, I am not without Hope, that even Those, who are brought up in *Sin* and *Folly*, may yet become *Witnesses* for GOD: And that those who are *Enemies*, yet shall become *Examples*, of true inward *Piety* and *Religion*, in the midst of a crooked, perverse Generation.

C H A P. IV.

The Evidences of being born again.

THE *Design* of this Chapter is, to set before you the *particular Instances* of that Change, which is wrought in the *Hearts*, and *Lives*, of them that are said to be *Born again*. These are sometimes put into the *Explication*, but I rather choose to insist on them as *Evidences*, of the *new Birth*. Some things I may have occasion to mention, that are necessarily *included* in the account of those First Impressions from above, that are Saving and Effectual: Others there are that will be found only, and wholly *consequent* thereupon: But I think it most proper, and useful, to consider *both together*; that we may have the more full and compleat view of them; and so, be able to pass a truer Judgment upon ourselves, whether we are really renew'd or not.

I heartily wish, that such as have been *deceiving* themselves, with an Imagination that all is well with them, would read over, and think of, the following Evidences of a saving Change, till they become *sensible* of their State and Condition. And
I should

I should rejoyce to contribute any thing toward the *peace* and *satisfaction*, of those that are full of *Doubts* and *Fears*, but yet truly *Regenerate*; by helping them to produce such Proofs, of their being the *Children of GOD*, as may safely be depended upon.

Let it be considered then, that wherever a saving Change is wrought, it will discover it self, both, in the *Mind* and *Temper inwardly*, and in the *Conversation* and *Behaviour outwardly*.

I. When a Man is truly *Regenerate*, there are plain *Evidences* of his being so in his *Mind* and *Temper*. Tho' the different, and nobler exercise, of the Reasonable Powers, and altering the general bent and disposition of the Soul, may not be so discernible in some, as in others; yet, there is enough to be observ'd in all, if they strictly look into themselves, to determine this matter,—whether such a *Change* be really wrought in them, or not.

I. *The Spirit of him that is Born again, is very lowly and humble.* When renewing Grace reach'd the Heart of a poor *Publican*, and first taught him to pray an acceptable *Prayer* to *GOD*, He did not think himself worthy so much as
to

to approach the *Temple*, or any thing that was *Sacred*; he *stood afar off*, and *smote* upon his *Breast*; in Luke xviii. 13. *very short*, but *very humble* Language, pouring out his Soul before the Almighty; *God be merciful to me a Sinner!*

A Principle of Grace, does so much *greaten* our views of the *Divine Perfections*; and, in such a manner, represent the *whole* of *God's Proceedings* toward the Children of Men; that *self* sinks into *nothing*: And we know not where to cast our selves, into a place or posture *low enough*, when we lift up our Eyes towards him that *dwells in the Heavens*.

Yea, there is a mighty Alteration, as to the *Lowliness* and *Humility* of those that have been under the influences of a *regenerating SPIRIT*, even toward their *Fellow-Creatures*. To this is owing, (what you may possibly have seen, and wondred at,) the exceeding *reverence* and *respect* which has been shewn, by some, toward those *Ministers* that have been Instruments of their Conviction and Conversion. Tho' *before*, such Persons would have been ready to treat Men of our Character with *insolence* or *disregard*; yet *now*, they esteem us worthy of *double Honour*;

Honour: And think, they cannot have too great a veneration, for those that are truly *serious*, and have been any way serviceable to make them *so*.

And then farther; this Humility and *Poverty of Spirit* will shew it self, in one Instance, or other, toward *All*: He that is *born of the Spirit*, looks upon them, that he thinks are thus renewed, as the *Excellent ones of the Earth*; and is ready to prefer the Attainments and Graces, of almost *every such Person* that he meets with, before his *own*. And where any appear contrary to him, he yet carries it with great meekness toward them, and is particularly careful not to give any just occasion of offence to them. Yea, such is the Character of the true Christian, that he is *cloathed with Humility*:

1 Pet. v. 5.

This is what, shews it self, in every Condition of Life; and becomes a Dress, that is worn at all times.

2. *The general and prevailing Disposition of a Soul that is Born again, will be very Sincere and Upright*. Folly, and Falshood, and Perverseness, are naturally bound up in our Hearts. Whilst unrenewed, it may be said of *every Man*, that *he walketh in a vain shew*: He sets up those things

Psal. xxxix. 6.

for

for *Excellencies* in himself, that are mere *Vanities*, and of no intrinsick value; or else, he *pretends* to those *Virtues*, and *Recommending Qualifications*, of which he is *really destitute*; and would be esteemed quite *another Person*, to what, in *Fact* and in *Truth*, he is. He would be thought to *know* things, of which he is sadly *ignorant*; I mean, the things of God and his *Salvation*: And will talk as boldly, and peremptorily about them, as if all the *Proceedings*, of the *Judge* of *quick* and *dead*, were to be determined, by his *Thoughts* and *Tongue*. He would be thought possess'd of those *Graces*, to which, his Life is a *Contradiction*; and will needs assume to himself the honour, of being a *Member* of the *true Church*, when he has nothing of *true Religion*. Thus also in the whole of his *Conversation*, and *Affairs* in the *World*, if you strictly observe such a Man; you will generally find him under one *disguise* or another; except, when he is gratifying his *Humour*, or his *Vices*, and then indeed you may come to a thorough knowledge of him.

The *Reverse* of this, is the Character of him that is *Born from above*. He is one that is truly sensible of the *Emptiness*, and *Deceit*, of all the *gay* or *wealthy* appearances of Men in this *World*: And
he

he is ready to *confess* the insufficiency of all these things, either to add to his *Worth*, or to make him *Happy*. And then in matters of Religion, he is one that does not carry his *Pretensions* to Knowledge, to Goodness, to inward Qualifications, or to outward Privileges, *farther* than what he finds *good ground* for, in himself. He does not affect to *appear* better than he *is*; but in *secret*, and at *heart*, is many degrees beyond what he seems to be, before *others*. Yea, I have sometimes thought, that to look upon a Good Man in his *weaknesses*, and *imperfections*; and to hear him acknowledge, as the *Saints* in *Scripture* have done, his very *worst* failings and miscarriages; has added a *Lustre* to that part of his Character, that *he is without Guile*. And if that expression be fully attended to, I do not, any where, know a *brighter* description of one that is *Born again*, or a *better* Evidence of our being *new Creatures*.

John i. 47.

3. The Understanding of him that is Born again, is enlightened, to discern those things, of which before it was ignorant, or at least, to which it shew'd no just regard. Hence it is, that the *Scripture* makes use of such *Phrases*, to describe this Change, as, being turned from *Darkness to Light*; and,

and, ye were sometimes *Darkness*, but now are ye *Light in the LORD*. Hereby intimating to us, that the *Discoveries*, which renewing Grace makes to the *Soul*, are like the breaking in of *Light* to the *bodily Eyes* when a Man has sat some time in *Darkness*: Whilst the Room where he sat was dark, tho' the very *same* Furniture Paintings and Ornaments were in it, that *afterward appear*, yet he sees *nothing at all* of them; but as soon as the *Light* shines upon him, he has then a great deal of pleasure and entertainment in *viewing* what is *about him*. Thus, the great *Truths* of *Religion* are most fully revealed, and laid before us; but we *perceive* them *not*, (at least in their excellency and importance,) till a *Heavenly Light* shines into our minds: And then, with the Apostle, we are ready to cry out, *O the depth of the riches both of the Knowledge and Wisdom of GOD!* Rom. xi. 33.

Those especially, that have been brought up *Strangers* to every thing of a Religious Nature, that have *never been* instructed in the Scriptures, or the first Principles of Christianity; have an *amazing Scene* opened to them, when first they *turn* their *Thoughts* to *Religion*, and are taught to *re-allize* the things that are *Eternal*. Such Converts, are thoroughly sensible of the *Illumination* of their Minds, by a renew-
ing

ing SPIRIT; and nothing more needs to be said under this Head, with respect to them. But in other Cases, when Men have attain'd a *speculative Knowledge* of the generally receiv'd Notions of Religion; or where, from *their Infancy* any have *known the Scriptures*, and have got by heart the chief things contained therein, it is not so easie to discover the *difference* there is in their *understanding* of Divine Things—*before*,—and *after*—their Conversion.

Natural Reason is manifestly more lively and penetrating in *some*, than in *others*: And the several ways of *Education*, do make a very great difference, even in them, that are of *equal Capacities*: In-
somuch, that the *first* Principles of Religion, *written in our Hearts*, may be understood, and talk'd of with *greater clearness*, by many who are guided only by *natural Light*, than by others that are enlightned with *saving Knowledge*: But then, these Principles have not the *same* effect and influence upon *Both*: There is another kind of *attention* to them, *relish* for them, and *practising* upon them, where they are *Spiritually* discerned; than where they are understood, only by the force of good *natural parts*, or the Advantages of a *polite Education*. And there are *some Truths* in the Christian Religion

Religion of such a nature, that the *A-*
postle says the *natural Man*,
 I Cor. xi. 14. (even the Man of Reasoning
 and Learning,) *cannot receive* them; but
only he, who is *taught* by the SPIRIT OF
 GOD.

We may very well compare, the *Ra-*
tional and *Spiritual Man*; when reading
 the *Terms of Salvation*, and the *Promi-*
ses of the Gospel; to a *Lawyer*, and an *Heir*,
 reading of the same *Will*: The *Lawyer*
 considers only the Sense and Expression of
 the several Articles, so as to observe
 what is the Force and Import of 'em
according to Law; But the *Heir* reads
 every Article with a very distinct *Appli-*
cation of it to *Himself*, in what is *be-*
queathed to him; and diligently observes,
 what is *required* of him: He forms his
 Measures and Conduct thereupon; lays it
by as his *Treasure*, and as the *Security*
 upon which he depends for all that he
 enjoys. Such a kind of Knowledge is
 that, which the *renewed Mind* is furnish'd
 with, as to *Spiritual* and *Heavenly*
 things: A Knowledge, that shews us our
Interest in them; and so must needs ex-
 cite another kind of *attention* and *regard*,
 than where they are made Matters of
mere Speculation.

So also, in the Case of those that, from their *Childhood*, have been acquainted with the *Holy Scripture*; we shall find a very great difference, between, — their *first sense* of things, — and *that*, which by *renewing Grace* they are brought to. The Memories of such are stored, with a variety of excellent and useful Passages, from the *Word of God*: They have learnt, perhaps, several *Summaries* of Religion: The *Articles of Faith*, and the *Rules of Duty*, which are commonly received in the Christian World, may be very readily and exactly *recited* by them: But all is *cold* and *ineffectual*, till the *SPIRIT of Regeneration* gives them their proper Force and Influence: While they *pronounce* the most solemn, and substantial, and self-concerning Truths, yet all passes merely for *words of course*, till *Divine Grace* makes them sensible of the vast *weight* and *meaning* of what has been rendred so familiar to them.

We may therefore conclude, from these several Instances; that wherever a *saving Change* is wrought in a Soul, it will introduce, and improve, *such a Knowledge* of the things of God, as those, that are in a *natural* State, are *Strangers* to; If not in the things *themselves*, that are known; yet in the *manner* of knowing them,

them, I believe, this may *always* be observ'd.

After I have *thus* explain'd, the *understandings being enlightned*, in him that is *born again*; I think there is no room left, for any Man to conceive *well* of himself, merely from his having imbib'd a set of *Good*, or as some would speak, *Orthodox Notions* in Religion: Nor will a Man's being furnish'd, with a set of *new Notions*, that may for a while *surprize* and *entertain* him, prove, that he is a *new Creature*. Nor yet, on the other hand, can any one reasonably conclude from what has been said, that his *State is bad*, if his *Knowledge of Divine Things be affecting*, and *operative*; tho' it may not be so *great*, or so *lately obtain'd*, as to appear any thing *extraordinary* to him.

4. *The Will of him that is Born again, is brought to an intire submission and obedience to the Will of God.* Some of the *first* words that *Converting Grace* put into the Lips of *St. Paul*, were, *LORD, what wilt thou have me to do?* And now, from a *furious, self-opinionated Persecutor*, he becomes a *tractable, submissive Learner*, of the *Truth as it is in JESUS*.

O the Power of Divine Grace! to remove all the *Prejudices* and *Obstinacy* of
Men;

Men; and to correct all that *Stubbornness* and *Reluctancy* of the Will, against the *Laws*, or the *Providence*, of GOD, which a vain *World*, a sinful *Heart*, and a malignant *Temper*, urge Men to: While our Wills are determin'd, by the common *Behaviour*, and *Inclinations*, of those amongst whom we live; or directed, by some *reigning Corruption* in our selves; or subject to the *wiles* and *suggestions* of the wicked one; there is an *enmity* to GOD, and to what he *requires* of us: But as soon as a Principle of Grace prevails in the Soul, it brings every Thought and Inclination into *subjection*.

Hereby, we are brought greatly to revere the *Will* of GOD, in his *Word*: And the *Commandment* is acknowledged to be *Holy, Just* Rom. vii. 12. and *Good*: Holy, in its *Precepts*; Just, in its *Threatnings*; Good, in its *Promises*; and *All*, in its great *End* and *Design*; most excellently contriv'd, and fit to be subscrib'd to, in every thing.

Grace teaches us, also, to bow to the *Will* of GOD in his *Providence*. Tho' our own *Projects* are cross'd, and those *Prospects* which we thought we had before us, may be cut off; yet we are taught to acquiesce, in the sovereign dis-
posals

posals of our great Governor and Owner, in every occurrence of our Lives. Our Schemes of *Action* are all submitted to him; our *Possessions* and *Enjoyments* are all resign'd into his hands; and our *expectations* are made entirely dependent upon him, to *accomplish*, or *over-rule* them, as he sees best.

Not that there is, such a subjection, in the Will of a regenerate Man, as to make *no resistance* to the *Commands* or *Disposals* of Almighty GOD: For then there would never be any of those *struggles* or *conflicts*, which good Men continually complain of, between *Grace* and *Corruption*: But there is such a subjection, in him that is *Born again*, That in his *esteem*, he gives a *preference* to the will of GOD; and, in his *endeavours*, strives to be more and more conformed to it; and, in *Fact*, this does at *last prevail* against all the *enslaving* Motions of an untoward volition and inclination.

Solomon, in the Book of *Proverbs*, frequently describes an Ill Man, as one that has a *perverse* and *froward heart*; which cannot be *led* and *governed*, by any Methods, or Directions, tho' never so wise or good. He that is *Born again*, must therefore be delivered, in some measure, from this disorder; and, as to
the

the *general bent* of his mind, must become *tractable* and *submissive*, ready to yield to every thing that would make him *Wiser* and *Better*.

I shall only add here; that where this is sought for, as an *evidence* of Regeneration, we are not to form a Judgment, either of our selves or others, from some *particular indispositions* of the Soul; from its *untoward Temper* at some times, and under extraordinary Provocations; but, from the general, and *most settled disposition* of it.

5. *The Conscience, of him that is Born again, is tender and faithful. Natural Conscience, is neither so soon alarm'd upon a miscarriage, nor so easily convinced of a Fault, nor so much concern'd at what is amiss, nor so hard to forgive and quiet it self after an offence, as the renewed Conscience is: So that, in all these instances, we may observe a very great difference, between the Regenerate, and the Unregenerate.*

Natural Conscience is alarm'd, only when Men are guilty of *open* and *scandalous* Sins: The renewed Conscience takes very great notice, even of *lesser*, and *secret* Faults.

When natural Conscience convicts of Sin, it does what it can to *colour over* and

excuse it; and to make it appear, in the most *favourable manner*, upon a representation of it: The renewed Conscience is careful to look upon every thing as it *really is*; and to take in every *Circumstance* of a Transgression, whether it make it seem *greater*, or *less*, than of *it self* it might be.

While the natural Conscience needs the utmost *exciting* and awak'ning, to make it sensible of the *great Evil* there is in Sin: The renewed Conscience needs no *Arguments*, or *Eloquence*, to move it; but is presently fill'd, with a very deep *uneasiness* and *concern*, at the thought of what has been amiss.

Natural Conscience is *soon silenc'd*, or *diverted*, and made easie, by *biding*, or *forgetting* the Sin that troubled it: But the renewed Conscience, when under a sense of *Guilt*, is like the *Eye* when it has got a *Mote* in it; *restless*, and rolling it self to and fro', and *watering* 'till it has wept it out; never *quiet* till it has some hope of a *renewed Pardon*.

But this, however, is to be observ'd; that, even the renewed Conscience is not, *equally* impressive, in all *Persons*; nor, in the same Person, at all *Times*. Those, that are of *bold* and *dispassionate* Tempers, are not impress'd to such a degree, as those that are *timorous* and of *quick Passions*:

Passions: Nor does a good Man, when under *desertion*, or in the *ebbings* of *Grace*, feel either so *soon*, or so *much*, as at other times, when he has offended. Nevertheless, where a Man is become a *new Creature*, I think it may be discovered, by the *impressiveness* of his Conscience, *more or less*, in all the foregoing respects.

6. *The Affections, of him that is Born again, are prevailingly Spiritual and Heavenly.* I say *prevailingly* Spiritual, because there are, in the *Best* of Men, very great mixtures of sensual, worldly *Affections* and *Passions*. And there is a very wide *difference*, among those that may be accounted *Good People* in the exercise of these.

Some have gained a *generous Contempt* of every thing in this World; and, with *ardent desires*, are continually pressing forward, toward the amiable Mansions of the Saints above: Whilst others are *careing*, and *contriving* about the present Life; and making, what they think *needful provision*, for future Years. Some there are, who can freely and cheerfully devote their *Substance*, and their *Time*, to any Religious *Service* and *Occasion*; whilst others are perpetually acting what

they call the *cautious* and the *wary* part; and are too apt to *over-value* their outward ease, and enjoyments. Some behave themselves, as if they had no other Objects of their *Hatred* and *Aversion*, and *Shame*, and *Anger*, but Sin and Folly; whilst others find a *thousand things*, to provoke these several *Passions* in them. Some there are whose *Joys* and *Comforts*, in the ways of GOD, do greatly abound: Others seem to be Persons of *sad* and *sorrowful* Spirits. Some have a mighty *Zeal* for Religion, and the Interest of CHRIST, in the World; others are more *calm* and *silent*, and *contracted* in their views of things. Some have scarce *any fear* of Calamities or Afflictions; others are in *perpetual Slavery* and Bondage thro' the *Fear* of *Death*, or *Poverty*, or some *approaching Evil*. So that very great allowances are to be made, for different Capacities, Constitutions, and outward Circumstances, when we look to the *Change* in our *Affections*, as an *Evidence* of our being *Born again*.

But, where any Man is become a *new Creature*, his Love, his Hatred, his Desires, his Aversions, his Hopes, his Joys, his Anger, his Zeal, his Fears, his Sorrows, his Shame, his Comforts, his Cares, must all be exercis'd upon new
and

and more deserving *Objects*, or in a new and better *manner*, than they generally are in a *natural State*. In *this*, especially, we ought to observe the *different exercise* of them; That, whereas before they were *hasty, irregular and impetuous*, after Renovation, they become more subject to *Restraint and good Government*.

Thus far you have an account of the *inward Change*, that is wrought by Regenerating Grace.

II. *There are other Evidences of the new Birth, in the outward Behaviour, and Conversation.* And now, by what is *outward* and more obvious, we may gain a *fuller and surer* knowledge, of what is *inward* and more liable to be mistaken. The *following* things, ought therefore to be considered, with the *foregoing* ones, before we pass a decisive and determinate Judgment upon our selves, as to our being in a Regenerate, or Unregenerate State. For certain it is, that if the *Temper, Understanding, Will, Conscience and Affections* be renewed; both our Words, and Actions, will be some way affected thereby: And that in such Instances as these.

1. *He that is Born again, is careful to avoid, and to watch against, all Sin.* St. John tells us in a Text before quoted, *He that is Born of GOD doth not commit Sin*: No, not of any kind so as to approve of it, and continue in it. A Regenerate Person hates and strives against Sin, *as Sin*: That is, as a thing contrary to the Law of GOD, and displeasing to him; And therefore he strives against every Sin: Having the *same Reason*, to shew a regard to the Commands and the Pleasure of Almighty GOD, in one instance, as in another.

Notwithstanding natural inclination, or any outward inviting Circumstances; yet still, the Language of a true Convert, to every solicitation that is Sinful, is like that of Joseph: *How can I do this or the other wickedness, and sin against GOD?* Gen. xxxix: 9.

Again; Renewing Grace extends to a striving against *secret Sins*, and such as lie out of the view and observation of others, as well as against publick Crimes and Scandals: And he that makes Conscience of these, fearing to offend or Sin against GOD, when *he only* is the witness of what is done, has an undoubted evidence of true Grace.

Farther,

Farther; *regenerating Grace* will teach a Man to watch against those very Sins that arise from *it self*. Such as, *Spiritual Pride*, and *Security*: By this, we are directed to subdue all *conceit* of our selves, and *contempt* of others, which our *Spiritual Attainments* might prompt us to. And we are also instructed not to grow *secure*, as if our Work was done, and we were out of danger, as soon as we find a Change wrought in us. The more *Grace* prevails, the more sensible will it make us of our being *unprofitable Servants*.

Nay, what is still more; a Principle of *Grace* will make us watchful against the very *occasions*, and *opportunities* of Sinning. This will put *Instances*, and particular *meanings*, to that general Petition, — *Lead us not into Temptation*. And it will teach us, to *walk* and *act* circumspectly; so as that our *Lives*, and our *Prayers*, may agree, and not contradict one another.

2. *He that is Born again, has a constant regard to every Duty.* A Principle of *Divine Life* will not suffer a Man to rest in *negative Goodness*; but will put him upon shewing a due respect, to every *positive Command* and *Institution* of the Gospel.

The *new Birth* introduces a Man into a most *busie Life*: It shews him a great deal necessary to be done, which before he was a stranger to. He that had his frequent returns of idle and unemploy'd Hours, now sees work enough for every hour and moment of his Life. And he grudges nothing so much, as the Time that is spent in repairing the Strength, and securing the health and good Temperament of the Body.

He that has a thoro' sense of Religion, will devote some part of his Time, to the Service of his GOD; and some, to the improvement of his *Mind*; and some also, to the service of his *Neighbour* and his *Relatives*: Which, together with the minding of his Worldly Affairs, must keep him constantly employ'd. There are *many* Duties, both *secret* and *social*, with reference to GOD and *Man*, of which we are insensible, till we are instructed in them, and urg'd to the performance of them, by the renewing influences of a Divine SPIRIT. This unfolds a vast Scheme of things, wrapt up in such a Summary of Religion as that, — *What doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy GOD*, Micah vi. 8.

He that is Born again, looks, without *exception or reserve*, to the Duties of both *Tables*; and to those, of all *Relations*: Not contenting himself, in what is low and common; but endeavouring, by his good works, *so to shine before men, as that they may be induc'd in like manner to glorifie his Father which is in Heaven.* Matth. v. 16.

And then, he is careful to *hold on* in the way of his Duty, whatever Tryals and Oppositions he may meet with; excepting in such Cases, as disable him, from attending to it.

Thus, allowing for unavoidable Infirmities, and Surprizes; which the best of Men are subject to; the *general Behaviour* of him that is Renewed, will shew that he is *so*.

3. *He that is Born again, is particularly careful of his Words.* As they are undoubtedly in a *Bad State*, who say with those in the xiith Psalm, *with our Tongue will we prevail, our Lips are our own; who is Lord over us?* So on the contrary, we are sure of the *Good State* of all them, that are concerned to govern these, and to order their words aright: According to St. Ch. iii. v. 2.
James; If any Man offend

not in word, the same is a perfect Man, and able also to bridle the whole Body.

Renewing Grace will teach a Man to
 Psal. xxxix. 1. take heed that he *sin not with his Tongue*; but rather to lay *absolute restraints* upon himself, and keep his Mouth as with a Bridle, when he is in Company that might provoke him to offend: And even at times when he allows himself the *greatest Freedom* and Liberty of *Conversation*, he is yet strictly observant of the Rules of Decency, Sobriety, and Religion.

He is careful not to Blaspheme, or trifle with, the Name of God; or to make a *jest*, of any thing that is *Sacred*. He will not talk lightly and unconcernedly of any *Immorality*, or make a *mock at Sin*: He is careful not to injure his *absent* Neighbour: Nor to provoke the Passions, and Resentments, of him that's *present*: His Conversation is guarded against every thing that is *immodest, unjust, lying, or discontented*: And, whatever may come under the notion of that
 Ephes. v. 4. *foolish talking, and jesting which are not convenient*, he is studious to avoid.

Farther; the Conversation of a Good Man is not only *harmless* and *inoffensive*, but it is *serious* and *religious* too. Upon
 all

all proper occasions, he loves to be talking of the best things, and telling what GOD has done for him: *Come and bear all ye that fear GOD, and I will declare,* says the Psalmist, *what he hath done for my Soul.*

Psal. lxvi. 16.

He loves to be conversing, with his *Fellow-Travellers*, of the *Place* they are going to, and the *way* that lies before them: And, if at any time he forbears such Discourse when in good Company, 'tis either, because he finds the Thoughts of those he is with, turn'd another way; or, because he suspects his own Ability; or, because he thinks some other Season may give greater force to what he would suggest: But still, in the frame and temper of his Mind, he is always set toward Heaven, and Heavenly things; and 'tis as *easy* and *familiar* to him that is *Born* from *above*, to converse of what is Spiritual, as for those, that are *Born only* of the *Flesh*, to talk of what they shall eat, and drink, and put on, and of what occurs daily to their Senses.

4. *He that is Born again, will manage every common Action, and worldly Affair, so as to serve a religious End and Purpose.* Saving Grace will cure, that otherwise incurable Evil, a *worldly selfishness*; and

will teach us to prefer, the good of our *Souls*, before the ease or gratification of our *Bodies*; and the Interest of JESUS CHRIST, before our *own Concerns* and *Interest*; and so, to bring every Affair and Business in *this World*, into an entire subserviency to our Hopes and Expectations in the *World to come*.

He, that has been brought up to any *Honest Employment*, is not required, upon his becoming a *new Creature*, to quit his Calling; and retire, from his Station, into a *Monastery*, or a *Desart*: 'Tis sufficient that he acts upon *new Principles*, and with *new Ends* and Designs, in his pursuit of such an Employment. He is *diligent in Business*, not from a *Covetous* or *Ambitious* aim of enriching himself; but from a *conscientious regard* to the Command and Appointment of God; who has made it every Man's Duty to *Labour*, and to *Employ* himself one way or other, so as to be *useful* in the World. Nor is it so much the *fear of Want*, that excites the industry of a good Man, as a *desire* to have *something* that may enable him to be *Friendly* and *Charitable*, to those about him; to have something *to give to him that needeth*, Ephes. iv. 28.

He, that is possess'd of a *large Estate*, is not oblig'd to *give it up* when he becomes

comes a *True Convert* ; but only to *manage* it so, as to render both his Substance, and his Interest, and his Time and his Abilities, as far as he can, serviceable to the promoting of Religion, and the welfare of others in the World : And where-ever a Principle of Divine Life, has been infused into the Soul, it will teach a Man to *Consecrate* all he has, to such purposes.

If a Man that is Renewed, gives up himself to any acts of Friendship and Hospitality, entertaining others and conversing with them, it is not to gratifie a Brutish Sensuality ; but to shew a kind disposition, to settle a good Acquaintance, by mutual Services to advance each other's welfare, and to joyn their thoughts and endeavours upon every occasion wherein they are equally concern'd.

Once more ; he that is inwardly and prevailingly Religious, will manage all Recreations and Exercises for the Health of his Body, and all his necessary Refreshments, so as to render him more fit for the Duties of his Station, and the Service of his GOD. In the *Apostles* Language, *whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, he does all to the glory of GOD.* 1 Cor. x. 31.

5. The last Evidence I shall mention of a Person's being *Born again*, as it appears in the Behaviour and outward Actions, is, *an abounding in all proper instances of Love and Charity toward his Brother*. St. John tells us
 1 John iii. 10. *expresly, that he who loveth not his Brother, is not of GOD*: And this is argu'd in a following Chapter, from its being the *Commandment of GOD, to Love our Brethren, as well as to Love himself*; and no Man can have a due regard to the one, but he must also observe the other. This *Love*, we are elsewhere told, must not be in *Word or in Tongue* only, but in *Deed and in Truth*: That is, our Actions must be such as may truly contribute to the Advantage and Benefit of our Brother.

That, which in a natural State is the Cause of Men's acting *injuriously* toward their Neighbours, (I mean *Self-Love*;) Renewing Grace will make the *Rule* and *Motive* of *doing good* to them: This will explain and enforce that Command, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self*.

Self-Love we see, generally, provokes Men to Strife and Contentions; defaming others, to raise their own Reputation; defrauding others, to increase their
 own

own Gains; and, in almost every Case, not regarding what Hurt is done to others, so that it make for their own Advantage: Whereas, if you look to one that is under the influence of Divine Grace, the *Love* that he has to *himself*, puts him upon all proper ways of shewing a Concern for the *Peace, Good Name,* and *Prosperity* of his *Neighbour*: And the more he finds in *himself*, a *desire* of this or the other comfortable enjoyment, the more will he *do*, in such respects, for the Help and Relief of *others*.

As to that grand Branch of Charity, *Almsgiving*, it is observable in the account of *Zaccheus's* Conversion, that *Salvation* was no sooner come to his House, but he presently says, *Behold,*
 LORD, *the half of my Goods*

Luke xix. 8.

I give to the Poor, &c. The Contributions *then*, indeed, were extraordinary; and the Case of *Zaccheus*, might make it especially requisite, that *his* should be *so*; but every Man that is brought into a State of Grace, will think it his Duty to consecrate *some proportion* of what he has, to Pious and Charitable Uses. For, let Men pretend to what they will, you always find that their *Expences* follow their prevailing *Affections*: What they have the greatest *Love* and *Liking* to, they

they are most ready to *spend upon*: So that if a Man be savingly Changed and *Renewed* in his *Temper*, and *Affections*, it will appear from his *Religious Expences*, as well as from the other *Actions* of his *Life*.

And now, I think, nothing more needs to be added for the enabling us to judge of our selves, whether we are *Born again*, or not.

But I am sensible these Evidences of a Man's being in a good State, are like to meet with a very different *Reception*, from different *Persons*.

Some, have found out ways to keep themselves easie, and to hope well as to their future Condition, where their *Lives* and *Tempers* are quite *contrary* to what I have been describing. *Others*, will only *pick out*, here and there, an *Evidence* that best pleases them; and whilst they drop many things that are requisite to their being thoroughly changed and renewed, are yet *presumptuous* enough, to rely upon some *few instances* which they may produce, in their own *Spirits* or *Behaviour*. A *Third* sort of People there are, who imagine they shall *never come up* to such a State as has been described; and therefore cannot obtain any *composed*,
satis-

satisfying, thoughts of their own Condition. Whilst some few, may possibly discover in themselves, *all the marks* and evidences of the *new Birth*, that are here set before them.

I shall therefore conclude the whole, in APPLYING my self, briefly, to *each* of these.

1. I would speak a little to *Them that are at ease, and willing to think their State good, altho' their Tempers and their Lives are quite contrary to what I have been describing.* I heartily wish such Persons would take time to consider—what their ease, and good opinion of themselves, is *owing to.* If you keep your selves easie by declining and neglecting all serious Enquiries about your State, 'tis certainly *bad*; and the *less* you are concerned about it, and acquainted with it, the *worse* it is. You may read the *Doom* of such as have *no understanding*, nor serious attention to things of this nature, in *Isaiab xxvii. 11.* *For it is a People of no understanding; therefore he that made them, will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them, will shew them no favour.* And no Man in his wits can think, that the Case of a *condemned Malefactor* is good, because he does not attend
to

to his *Sentence of Condemnation*: Or that a Person, who is languishing under a *mortal Distemper*, is *well*, because he will *not be persuaded* that he is in a dangerous Condition.

But then farther; tho' you may not have been altogether thoughtless, yet if you have considered Matters, only so far, as to take up some *general notions* of the *Goodness and Mercy of God*, that may serve to make you *easy* in your Sins, without engaging you to *forsake* them, and *repent* of them; you will then fall under that dreadful Sentence in xxix.

Deuteronomy, 19, 20. He who thus *blesseth himself in his heart, saying I shall have peace, tho' I walk in the imagination of mine Heart, to add drunkenness to thirst*; (and so of any other Sin that is lived in;) *the LORD will not spare him, but then the anger of the LORD and his jealousy shall smoke against that man*; being the more provoked by his *presuming* on that Goodness which he *despises*; and all the *Curses that are written in this Book, shall lie upon him, and the LORD shall blot out his Name, notwithstanding all his Confidence, from under Heaven.*

And once more; if you have thought on such Representations of the *Christian's Happiness*, and the *Christian's Character*

as

as those before laid down, with *aversion* and *detestation*, your Case is deplorable indeed. I have heard of a *profane Wretch* that said, *if Heaven was fill'd with such Company, as those that are called Saints here on Earth, he would never desire to come there.* But canst thou, Man! so easily give up the thoughts of *Heaven*? and be willing, instead of going thither, to lie down in *devouring Flames*? *Think well, I beseech thee!* before thou renouncest the Character, and the Company, of the *Saints*. If thy Soul, is not gathered with *Theirs*, it must be a Companion of *Devils*: There is no living any more, *between Heaven and Hell*, when once thou art gone out of *this world*: Thy *sensual Delights*, will all be lost for ever; and leave thee under the torment, of an *insatiable Thirst* after them: Thy *sinful Companions*, will then encrease thy misery; and thy own *Conscience*, will incessantly reproach thee for thy present Folly. Then, with *showry Eyes*, and with an *aking Heart*, thou wilt look to the beautiful Regions of *Light and Love*; where, thou mightest have had a Place; but from which, thou art now condemned to an *Eternal Banishment*. *O that thou would'st know, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace.*

2. I would next say something to them, *that are content in being able to find out (in themselves) some few of the foregoing Evidences, when at the same time, many things are yet wanting to their being savingly renewed.* If there be just reason for your attending to Religion *at all*, the same reason there is for your making *thoro' work* in it: Because, without this, our pretending to be Religious will avail us nothing. He that professes to *keep the Law*, or expects to be saved by the

James ii. 10. *Gospel, and yet stately offends, either by omissions or commissions, in one point, will be condemned as certainly, as if he had been guilty of all.*

Some Men are apt to think well of themselves for the sake of their *inward Piety*; in which, they apprehend they exceed many, that make a greater *shew of Goodness* in their Conversation and Behaviour: Others judge of themselves, by their *outward Profession*; and take up a good opinion of themselves, because they have *a name to live*; altho' in secret, and in their Spirits, they are very much estranged from God and the exercises of Religion: The *first* of these, by pretending to have *good Hearts*, may deceive

ceive themselves; and the *latter*, by taking care to preserve a *good Name*, may deceive their Neighbours; but neither the *one*, nor the *other*, can deceive or impose upon an Omniscient GOD. We must *be transformed*, by the *renewing of our minds*; and we must *be holy*, also, in all *manner of Conversation*; if we would be *acceptable* in the sight of GOD.

Rom. xii. 2.

I Pet. i. 15.

Farther; there are some Persons that glory in the *Church* they are of, and in *acts of Devotion* toward GOD; as if they needed no *more*, to prove they are in a *good state*: Whilst others boast of their being *Just* and *Charitable*, and observing their *Duty* toward their *Neighbour*; as if this, *alone*, was sufficient to save them: Whereas, if he that frequents the places of Divine Worship, lives in *enmity* and *hatred* to his *Brother*; or in *Covetousness*, which is *Idolatry*; or in any *other Sin* against the Precepts of the *Second Table*, CHRIST has expressly disowned such: And, if he that is abounding in all expressions of *Love to his Neighbour*, does yet *restrain Prayer* before GOD; and neglect the giving him that *Honour*, which is *due unto his Name*; he stands condemned as a despiser of the *first and great Commandment*,

Matth. xxii. 37. *mandment, both of the Old and New Testament.*

In these, and such like instances, Men would have us *dispense* with the marks and evidences of *true Grace*, that we may suit their several *Dispositions*, and *Attainments*: But, however it may be the Interest of the Leaders of Parties to mislead their Followers; and however it may suit the inclinations of some easie temper'd Men, to oblige *them* that they have a respect for; yet neither will the Representations of one, nor another, be of any significancy, where they *pervert* or *dissemble* the Scripture account of things: *Then shall I not be ashamed*, says the *Psalmist*, *when I have respect unto All thy Commandments.* Psal. cxix. 6.

3. It may be proper to hint a few things, to them *that are savingly renewed*, but yet are *uneasie and perplex'd about their State and Condition*, because they cannot discover all the *afore-mention'd Evidences in themselves*.

It is no unusual thing to meet with such, as in the Judgment of those that are acquainted with them, may be esteem'd *truly Religious*; who yet labour under so many doubts and discouragements in their own Spirits, that they cannot discern
any

any thing that shall give satisfaction to themselves. To such, I would recommend the following Considerations: Which I beg they would take time, farther to enlarge upon, and to apply to their own Case and Circumstances.

Those that have but *lately* been under *serious impressions*, must make great allowances for the *weakness* of Grace in its *first Beginnings*. Tho' they have not that clear and full *Knowledge* of Divine things which they desire; nor that *Government* of their *Passions* and *Temper*s; nor that raisedness and spirituality of their *Affections*, which some have attained to; yet, so long as they are *sincerely endeavouring* to gain all this, and are attending to the proper appointed *means* of their doing so, they have abundance of reason to hope well of themselves.

Again; those that are under any darkness and disorder, by the *breaking out* of some *one Sin*, that appears grievous and tormenting to them; must not expect to obtain, a thoro' composedness of Mind, or any settled ease and peace of Conscience, till that is *sincerely repented* of. A sense of Guilt, in *one Instance*, will dash all other *Evidences*, how great and considerable soever they may seem, in the Eyes of those that are acquainted with us.

Farther;

Farther; there may not be a suitable sense of our *dependence* upon the SPIRIT of GOD: And so, for a while, Persons may be under confusion and mistakes; hereby, to lead them to honour the SPIRIT, as they honour the FATHER, and the SON, in the great Work of their Conversion and Regeneration. By our first awful apprehensions of GOD, and approaches to him, in our *being Born again*, we honour the FATHER: By our earnest Addresses to JESUS CHRIST, and seeking for the Favour and Acceptance of GOD *in and thro' him*, we honour the SON: But then we must be brought to a direct application of our selves to the HOLY SPIRIT; that he may shew us *how far, this* and the *other* Evidence of Grace, belongs to *our selves*; and may assist us, in forming a right Judgment thereupon: And when we are once duly affected with a sense of his doing *this* for us, we then honour the SPIRIT, as our *Sanctifier* and *Comforter*. But I am persuaded, a great deal of the perplexity of good People, is owing, to their want of regular Thoughts in this Matter.

Sometimes, Allowances must be made for *Bodily Distempers*; and for *pressing Calamities* in the World; and for a *weakness* of *Understanding*, and natural Abilities;

ties; And for some *evil Reports*, or *ill Carriage* of those about us; Any of which may very much disorder our *Imaginations*, and obscure every Evidence that might afford comfort to us.

But, these things being duly observed; such Evidences, as those before laid down, ought still to be insisted on: And we should give *all Diligence*, to make this Point sure.

THE LAST sort of Persons I would Address my self to, *are those, that have been able to discover, in themselves, the marks of their being Born again, so as to be satisfied therewith.*

There is not a Privilege of which human Nature is capable, that can so much deserve to be gloried in, as this, — that we are the *Children of God*. To be his Children by *Adoption*, is to have a *right* to his *Kingdom*; being *Heirs* and *joint Heirs with CHRIST JESUS*: And to be made Children by *Regeneration*, is to be *partakers of the Divine Nature*: And shall we not think *this*, matter of Glory?

Rom. viii. 17.

2 Pet. i. 14.

Let us however take care, while we rejoyce in our *Privilege*, that we do not forget our *Duty*: Let us be *followers of GOD as dear*

Eph. v. i.

H

Chil-

Children: Imitating his Perfections; and endeavouring to shew forth his Praises, and Excellencies, to all that behold us.

1 Pet. ii. 9.

A Sense of our being *Born again*, should encourage us to bear up against the *Hatred and Contempt of the World*: *If ye were of the World*, says our SAVIOUR, *the World would love its own; but now I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.* John xv. 19.

Yea, this should support us under all kind of *Afflictions*. If I am *Created anew* in CHRIST JESUS, I may certainly conclude, GOD will not forsake this work of his own hands. Those that are *born from above*, must expect *Discipline and Correction* from thence, till they are got thro' this State of *Education*: But they may humbly hope that he who has begun a good work in them, will perfect it; and so bring them to their Father's House, the *Inheritance of the Saints in Light*.

To add no more; This, should make us think, continually, of that *State and World* to which we are *born*. And when we have thought the *farthest*, still we must remember, that, whilst we are here in our *minority*, we think as *Children*, and express our selves as *such*; but when we

we shall arrive at the *full stature*, and perfect knowledge, of the *Heavenly Inhabitants*, our present *weak* and *imperfect* Sense of things will be *done away*.

Now are we the Sons of 1 John iii. 2.
GOD; and it doth not yet
appear what we shall be: But we know
that when he shall appear we shall be like
him, for we shall see him as he is.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

PAge 6. l. 4. instead of *being a born*, r. *a being born*, p. 22. l. 19. instead of *is*, r. *it*, p. 99. l. 25, for *they* r. *thy*, p. 115. l. 19. for *understood*, r. *understood*, p. 118. l. 25, for *will*, r. *wilt*.



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